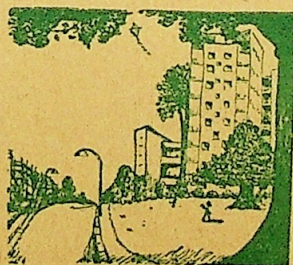


NEW TOWNS

Their Challenge and Opportunity

L. E. WHITE

Author of
Tenement Town
Community or Chaos
Small Towns



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NEW TOWNS

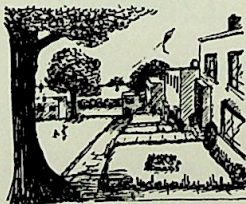


Their Challenge and Opportunity



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Community or Chaos
Small Towns



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SPECIAL NOTE

Some of the information recorded was collected last year and may have been superseded or modified in a few cases by subsequent happenings as events are now beginning to move more rapidly in the new towns. This does not, however, alter the general conclusions.

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FOREWORD

For over thirty years the National Council of Social Service has had a deep and practical interest in community organisation and it has been privileged to play a part in many new community experiments in town and country. It was appropriate therefore that the National Council should publish a series of studies of the social problems of three types of urban area—new housing estates, small towns, and new towns. The first two, already published,* have created widespread interest. This, the third of the series, appears at an opportune moment in the year when the Development Plans for the whole country are due to be presented to the Ministry of Local Government and Planning and when the beginnings of the new towns are on show for all to see. At such a time when the machinery of planning is subject to criticism and overhaul it is well to be reminded of underlying social issues. Does this machinery enable ordinary people to live healthier, happier, fuller lives? Can our towns become places in which work and leisure can find a happy synthesis and a satisfying community life be created?

One of the fundamental problems of our time is to find means by which ordinary citizens can be brought into the complex business of planning as active partners in a creative process.

In the new towns we can see communities working out these social problems *ab initio* and, while the shape of many of their efforts is naturally determined by the special environments of the new towns, there are nevertheless important lessons to be drawn for community organisation in other parts of the country. It is hoped that the Development Plans on which the local authorities have been working will be regarded, not as final or static conceptions, but as providing the basis of a continuous process of growth. They should be discussed and criticised and every effort should be

**Community or Chaos*. New Housing Estates and their Social Problems. National Council of Social Service. 1950.

Small Towns. Their Social and Community Problems. National Council of Social Service. 1951.

made to understand them. To aid in this process local study groups in many parts of the country are being established in co-operation with the Town and Country Planning Association and the National Council of Social Service; and their purpose will be to examine and study in a constructive spirit the local plan which has been prepared by their local authority.

It is to be hoped that these studies, by helping people to appreciate the human and social issues involved, may contribute to the great task of making our towns, both old and new, better places in which to live.

G. E. HAYNES.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to those whose assistance is acknowledged in the Introduction, the author wishes to express his special thanks for assistance with illustrations to the Development Corporations of Crawley, Harlow, Hemel Hempstead and Stevenage; to the Council of Industrial Design for permission to use the photograph facing page 64 and to the Town and Country Planning Association for the loan of photographic blocks; also to Data Films, The Grentell Baines Group of Preston, and Messrs. Burrough & Hannam of Bristol.

The drawings on cover and title page are by Leonora Jolley.

Thanks are also due to the following for permission to reproduce extracts from current publications: Messrs. Faber and Faber, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*; and to the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office whose permission to reproduce extracts from the following has been obtained: *The Barlow Report*, *Reports of the New Towns Corporations 1950*, *Final Report of the (Reith) New Towns Committee 1946*, *Report of the Committee on the Qualifications of Planners*; to Mr. R. Nicholas, the City Surveyor, Manchester, for permission to quote from his address to the North West Regional Conference of the National Housing and Town Planning Council.

INTRODUCTION

AMID the waste and destruction of war it was natural that men should dream of fairer cities that might arise on the ruins of the old. Nor was it surprising that the New Towns project would catch the imagination of people not only in this country but all over the world. It is a sad and sobering reflection on human frailty that this great enterprise should have encountered such delays, confusion and frustration as to come near to ignominious failure. Now, as the first thin trickle of houses begins to appear, might seem a somewhat inopportune moment to enquire into the problems of social and community development in new towns. Although it might appear better to wait until an appreciable number of residents have settled in, an equally good case can be made for focusing public attention on this problem *now*, in the early formative stages, as the first settlers are arriving, while there is still time for second thoughts and before it is too late to make changes. The story of the housing estates told in the first publication in this series* should be a solemn warning to us that even repentance for our former errors is no guarantee that we shall be preserved from repeating them in the future. The experience should serve as a salutary reminder of the gulf that yawns between the perfection of paper plans and the creation of living communities.

It is true that so much social research has been carried out in connection with the new towns that our failure to plan adequately for their social needs would this time be inexcusable. There is no doubt too that the great majority of officials and members of the Corporations, Ministries and local authorities responsible for new town development are only too well aware of the immense and complex social problems which confront them. But it is not enough that the experts alone should know. In the last resort all good planning depends on the creation of an informed public opinion. Particularly is this true of community planning where everything turns on the enlightened co-operation of those for whom the plans are made—the people who will go to live in the new towns. It would perhaps not be unfair to say that had more M.P.s of all parties been better acquainted with the general principles of town and country planning and the contribution which the new towns could make to healthier and happier living, we should not have waited nearly five years for the first houses to appear in them.

**Community or Chaos*, N.C.S.S.

The National Council of Social Service has a valuable and almost unique contribution to make to any study of community development. From its inception after the first world war it has had a continuing concern for the *quality* of community life and for the participation of the citizen in institutions of his own creation. This has expressed itself in diverse movements; in rural areas by the provision of village halls and the stimulation of Parish Councils; in the old urban areas, first by the creation of Councils of Social Service, and later in the 1920's by fostering on new housing estates Community Associations and Centres. Moreover in this latter movement the National Council gained invaluable knowledge and insight into the special problems created by the transfer of great populations from slum and city areas out to the new estates on the fringe of the cities—problems with a striking resemblance to some of those which the new towns now face.

The personal contribution which I myself can bring to the consideration of this problem is that through my former work with the National Council and the National Federation of Community Associations in the development of Community Centres and Associations I entered into the rich inheritance of experience which was theirs. In addition my earlier work as secretary of a Community Association on a block-dwelling estate where the Association had a measure of success in planning and campaigning for neighbourhood improvement, gave me some insight into the complexities of practical neighbourhood planning as well as the disheartening difficulties of any form of community work in new housing areas. My present residence on the great L.C.C. estate at St. Paul's Cray in Kent, where all the difficulties of rapid housing development are present, is the culmination of this experience. Here in this "quasi-satellite" town may be seen and studied at first-hand many of the problems which the new towns will face. The unusual value of this point of observation is that the L.C.C. "out-county" estates are the complete contradiction of the new towns policy, and yet at the same time their social and community problems have much in common. Indeed so interesting is this contrast and comparison that this estate can be regarded as a laboratory for the testing of theories in community planning. Many references have therefore been made to its problems because of their relevance to development likely to take place in the new towns. As some of these references, particularly those relating to the failure to make provision for social needs, are inevitably critical, it should be stated in fairness at the outset that the entire blame cannot be laid upon any one authority. Health and Education services (including the provision of Health Centres and Community Centres) are the responsibility of the county

authority in whose area the estate is built. Moreover, the county councils, including the L.C.C. are, in their turn, the victims of changes in Government policy, as for instance in those reflected in the cuts in the capital investment programme affecting the programme for Health Centres, Community Centres and other community buildings. It is therefore the whole system with its inter-relating authorities, ministries, and, in the new towns, Development Corporations, which is subjected to critical examination.

Experience has naturally been drawn from the two earlier pioneer experiments at Letchworth and Welwyn, and a chapter has been devoted to their story.

It will be obvious that any study of community development in the new towns at the present time will of necessity be of a preliminary nature and any conclusions will be tentative and likely to be modified in the light of later and fuller experience.

I have been greatly assisted in the preparation of this study by the helpful co-operation of officials of Ministries, officials and members of the new towns' Corporations, and the relevant local authorities, as well as officers and members of Community Associations, Churches, Youth Organisations and other voluntary societies. Visiting most of the new towns and discussing their problems with officials and with residents old and new has been an exhilarating and worthwhile experience. The visitor is left with the impression that the development of the new towns is in good hands and that despite all the present frustrations and disappointments, this great "essay in civilisation" will go forward with vision and understanding.

St. Paul's Cray, Kent.

1st February, 1951.

SECTION I

The Factual Background

CHAPTER I

WHY NEW TOWNS?

Origin of the "Green Belt" idea—historic interdependence of town and country—the Industrial Revolution, growth of cities, Ebenezer Howard and the garden city—garden suburb triumphs over garden city—suburban sprawl—the new planning; the need for dispersal; the Barlow Report; the New Towns Act.

IT is not always realised that the giant cities and conurbations, in which nearly half the inhabitants of Britain now live, are a product of the last century of rapid growth. Until then towns were limited in size, rarely growing much beyond a mile in radius and with populations rarely exceeding 50,000. One of the limiting factors was the need to grow food for the inhabitants since primitive transport precluded bulk movements of food. Hence we find the idea of a "green belt" of agricultural land around the town deeply rooted in the town building traditions of many civilisations. Jews,* Greeks and Romans all tried in varying ways to limit the size of their towns either by preserving the surrounding arable and pasture land or by "hiving off" to found new cities as the earlier ones outgrew the food-producing capacity of their environs. The same tradition carried over into medieval Europe where in the space of 400 years the founding of 2,500 Germanic Cities is recorded. From earliest times, however, there was an opposing tendency for towns to spread as the wealthier citizens sought to enclose land for their houses and gardens in the suburbs so as to enjoy simultaneously the benefits of town and country living. This desire of the townsman to have access to the countryside is deep rooted but it has slowly been defeated and frustrated by the ever-growing cities. Sir Thomas More expresses this desire in his *Utopia*, that first prophetic vision of the garden city of the future. Utopia's fifty-odd cities were to be not less than twenty miles apart; there the townsman, familiar from childhood with the country which sustained his city and skilled in country crafts, might labour in the harvest fields.

*Old Testament references include: "And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Command the Children of Israel that they give unto the Levites . . . cities to dwell in . . . and the suburbs of them shall be for their cattle, and for their goods and for all their beasts. . . . And the suburbs . . . shall reach from the wall of the city and outward a thousand cubits round about . . . And the city shall be in the midst." Numbers xxxv. 1-5.

"But the field of the suburbs . . . may not be sold, for it is their perpetual possession." Lev. xxv. 34.

But instead of Utopia there came the Industrial Revolution which made inevitable the mushroom growth of great cities. Events conspired together to break up the old pattern of town and country with their interdependence upon each other. The new factories and mills demanded large pools of unskilled labour; so dense concentrations of population grew up around the new centres of power as workers crowded in to man the new machines. Driven from the land by enclosure acts which the new farming methods demanded, these workers were herded together in the grim slums which grew up around the factory gates in the industrial towns. Mean and squalid houses crowded among the factories, warehouses and smoking slag heaps and around the network of railway lines which carried in cheap foreign food to the workers and bore away the products of their toil to the expanding markets of the world.

Devoid of form and destitute of either beauty or dignity these planless cities grew. To-day, despite the efforts of nearly a century of reform and amelioration, vast tracts of such towns remain as abiding memorials to a process, which, whilst it made Britain the richest country in the world, left a heritage of graceless and ill-planned towns. They serve as a grim reminder of the consequences of past failure to plan cities to meet the simple elemental needs of men and women.

At the end of the nineteenth century when most reformers were preoccupied with attempts to mitigate the evil consequences of disease-ridden slums, one man, Ebenezer Howard, saw with remarkable insight that as these evils arose from the overcrowding of the cities in which an ever-increasing number of his fellow countrymen lived, the only effective cure was to relieve the congestion by the founding of new towns. Himself an inventor, Howard saw that the cities of his time were outmoded—unfit for human habitation, so he planned a new town, the first garden city, more suited to the times and in keeping with basic human needs.

His little book, *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, first published in 1898, revised and reissued four years later with the new title *Garden Cities of To-morrow*, was destined to revolutionise town planning all over the world. A keen observer, he describes the pull of the "Town-Magnet" with its lure of work, higher wages and the bright lights of the city—at the cost of smoke, dirt, disease and slums. He saw too the pull of the "Country-Magnet"—health, fresh air, beauty—at the cost of low wages, dullness and decay. His problem—"How to restore the people to the land—that beautiful land of ours, with its canopy of sky, the air that blows upon it, the sun that warms it, the rain and dew that moisten it—the very embodiment of Divine love for man"—he solves by creating a new

"Town-Country Magnet" embracing the good things of both without their disadvantages. The garden city he proposed was to be limited in size and not merely a city of gardens, though it would be that, but a real city set in its own great garden of the countryside to which all would have access—not merely those who gained a brief and temporary access from sprawling suburbs soon to be swallowed up by the engulfing town.

His new town was to be fairly compact—housing some thirty thousand people in a radius of three-quarters of a mile—a density of about thirty to the acre. The "unique combination of proposals" which he advocated contains most of the ideas which have become accepted concepts of modern town planning. These include the planned dispersal of both industry and people from overgrown, overcrowded cities to small new towns, limited in size so that their inhabitants could be near to work, country, shops and amenities, and with open planning to allow for private gardens, schools and parks. The physical framework of such towns would be planned from the outset, with their whole area, including that of the surrounding agricultural belt, held in unified semi-public or trust ownership, so that increased land values accrued to the community. Development and the quality and design of building would be controlled through leasehold covenants and the fixing of maximum densities; industrial and residential areas would be carefully zoned and the town divided into neighbourhoods or wards each to some extent a self-contained unit. Within this general framework, industry and trade and the life of the town would be encouraged to develop under free and individual enterprise. Howard was sure his city would grow, so he describes how the errors of present city growth must be avoided:

"How shall it grow? How shall it provide for the needs of those who will be attracted by its numerous advantages?—Shall it build on the zone of agricultural land which is around it, and thus for ever destroy its right to be called a "Garden City"? Surely not. This disastrous result would indeed take place if the land around the town were, as is the land around our present cities, owned by private individuals anxious to make a profit out of it. For then, as the town filled up, the agricultural land would become "ripe" for building purposes, and the beauty and healthfulness of the town would be quickly destroyed. . . . The town *will* grow; but it will grow . . . by establishing . . . another city some little distance beyond its own zone of "country" so that the new town may have a zone of country of its own. . . . In course of time we should have a cluster of cities . . . so grouped around a central city that each inhabitant of the whole group, though in one sense living in a small city, would

be in reality living in, and would enjoy all the advantages of, a great and most beautiful city; and yet all the fresh delights of the country—field, hedgerow and woodland—not prim parks and gardens merely—would be within a very few minutes' walk or ride ”*

The vision of Howard and the enthusiasm of the small group of idealists who collected around him resulted in the founding of the first Garden City of Letchworth in 1903. There were a number of imitations and a number of perversions of the basic idea.† Nevertheless the first garden city exercised a profound influence on town planning thought all over the world. This was not entirely the kind of influence its founder would have hoped. By a strange irony only one more garden city was founded—that at Welwyn in 1920.‡ Why did this great idea which might have revolutionised the whole course of urban development in the twentieth century, fail to take hold? The reasons are many and complex and can only be hinted at here.§

The transport revolution produced by steam power helped to create the densely congested cities of the nineteenth century. The second transport revolution — the petrol engine and electric traction — helped to decant the population out on the suburban fringe, thus hastening the typical twentieth century development—suburban sprawl. For now all but the very poor could live where once the rich and the carriage folk had lived —between town and country. Against this voluntary unplanned decentralisation, the Garden City movement of planned and orderly dispersal stood no chance. (One isolated element of Raymond Unwin's Letchworth plan—its open planning at 12 houses to the acre—did, however, become the accepted standard for nearly all suburban development. Thus, ironically, the vast areas of featureless suburban housing which the Garden City movement might have prevented, were all developed at the density laid down by the Garden City planners.)

**Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, pp. 140-2.

†There was, needless to say, considerable opposition—some the result of misunderstanding. Even the Fabians wrote of Howard's ideas: "His plans would have been in time if they had been submitted to the Romans when they conquered Britain. They set about laying out cities and our forefathers have dwelt in them to this day. . . . We have got to make the best of our existing cities, and proposals for building new ones are about as useful as would be arrangements for protection against visits from Mr. Wells' Martians". *Fabian News*, 1898.

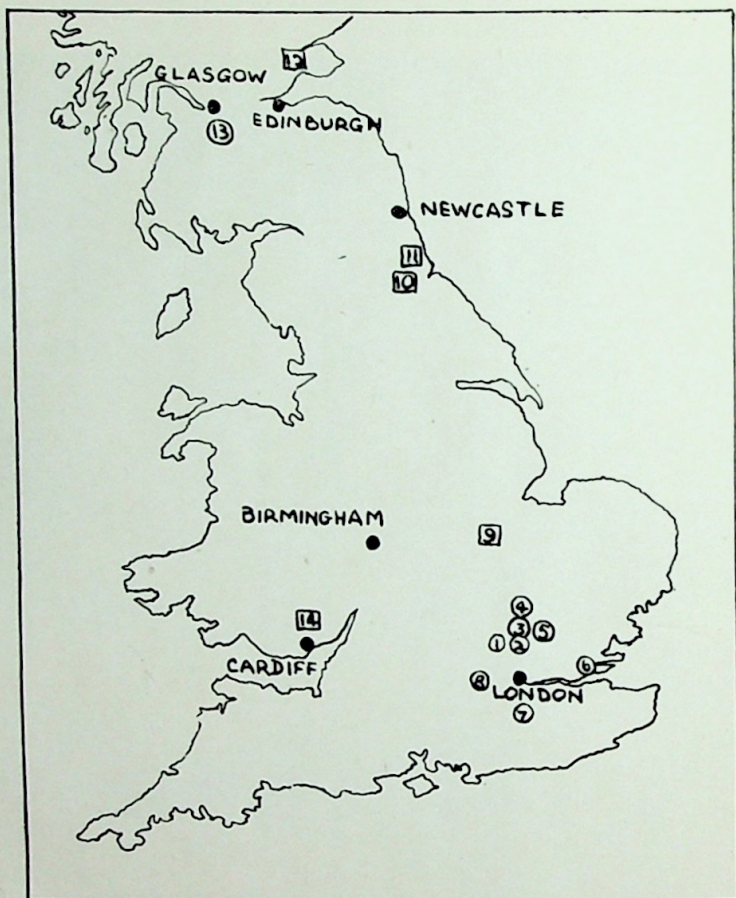
‡It is true that Hilversum, Frankfurt-on-Main, Radburn and the green belt cities of the U.S. all embodied elements of Howard's plan.

§For a detailed and penetrating analysis of these reasons see *Green Belt Cities* by F. J. Osborn.



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- 4 Stevenage
- 5 Harlow
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- 7 Crawley
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Midlands concentration:

- 9 Corby

North-East concentration:

- 10 Newton Aycliffe
- 11 Peterlee

Scotland concentration:

- 12 Glenrothes

Glasgow de-concentration:

- 13 East Kilbride

Wales concentration:

- 14 Cwmbran

Large gardens and a measure of landscaping were deemed enough to justify the title "Garden Suburb", but with these two features the resemblance to the "Garden City" ended. As F. J. Osborn suggests, there is little doubt that this wholesale confusion of terms helped the Garden *Suburb* to triumph over the Garden *City* idea.* Instead of new towns separated from the parent city by a belt of country, cities began to sprawl out in long straggling tentacles of "ribbon building" along the motor roads and to the centres fed by the new suburban railways. This fringe growth, although it brought many people within *temporary* reach of healthier and more open conditions had many unfortunate consequences.†

The journey to work in the city became long, tiring and expensive. Standards of living were in some cases depressed by greatly increased travel costs, while the increased leisure gained by the workers was wasted in queues and strap-hanging in overcrowded transport. Lacking in opportunities for work or the amenities of urban living, the new estates remained mere dormitories devoid of any significant social life of their own. Of all the many social problems created, the most serious was the total breakdown of community life. Without any of the traditional centres of social life and hampered by lack of leadership, it was hardly surprising that the new estates failed to develop as communities. Dullness, frustration and isolation were characteristic. Civic pride—the sense of belonging to a town, dwindled to the point of extinction. The process of segregation into large "one-class" reservations which had proceeded spontaneously in the previous century, was now accelerated and built into the very fabric of national life by official housing policy in the creation of large estates solely for working-class tenants.

Other disastrous consequences were the loss of nearly a million acres of agricultural land on the outskirts of the cities where it was of the utmost importance in providing fresh food; the denial of access to the country for multitudes of city-dwellers; and the creation of insoluble traffic problems for towns whose design belonged to the era of horse transport.

*This confusion cannot easily be excused as the Garden City Association publicised the following definition: "A Garden City is a Town designed for healthy living and industry; of a size that makes possible a full measure of social life, but not larger; surrounded by a rural belt; the whole of the land being in public ownership or held in trust for the community."

†For a fuller discussion of the problems created by this unregulated suburban development and the growth of the inter-war housing estates, see *Community or Chaos* already published in this series.

A major reason for this peripheral spread was the soaring cost of land values in the central areas. For the poorest who could not afford high suburban costs, or to be far from their work, this meant re-housing in large blocks of tenement flats in the old slum areas. Additional housing subsidies had to be given to meet the enormous land costs—thus subsidising most heavily the least suitable form of dwelling and environment for the large families which comprised so high a proportion of that part of the population unable to move out to the suburban estates.

During this period of unplanned and disorderly suburban growth, Letchworth and Welwyn, the only two working models expressing the Garden City idea, continued to progress slowly and steadily despite many difficulties and problems, to some of which reference will be made in the next chapter because of the valuable light they throw on the problems which are likely to be met by the new towns. Despite misrepresentation and the wholesale perversion of its main idea, the Garden City movement continued its enthusiastic but almost singlehanded advocacy of town and country planning with the dispersal of industry and population and the building of new towns. They were little more successful than Canute. The tide of bricks and mortar continued to engulf the green fields at a rate which at last began to give cause for alarm. As far back as 1920, a Government Committee under the late Mr. Neville Chamberlain (the Unhealthy Areas Committee) had recommended the removal of factories from certain London areas to garden cities, and again in 1934 the Marley Report recommended the building of satellite towns of the Welwyn type. Instead, however, the deepening depression of the 1930's in the industrial North and in South Wales, accelerated the existing drift of industry and population to the Midlands and the London region, until the Special Areas Commissioner was constrained to describe the continued growth of London as "a national menace". It was, however, the setting up of the Barlow Commission* by Mr. Chamberlain in 1937 which was to pave the way for a more positive approach to town planning than anything which the earlier permissive legislation had afforded.

Reporting in 1941 the Commission stressed that "the continued drift of the industrial population to London . . . constitutes a social, economic and strategic problem that demands immediate attention" and recommended decentralisation or dispersal both of industry and population from congested urban areas so as to encourage a reasonable balance of industrial development throughout the various regions of Great Britain, including the construction of

*The Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population.

garden cities and satellite towns as well as the further development of existing small towns.

Even this Report might have shared the fate of earlier warnings had it not appeared at the very time when bombs were laying waste the heart of the cities, emphasising the strategic needs for dispersal and making redevelopment essential. Accepting the proposal for a Central Planning Authority the Coalition Government set up the Ministry of Town and Country Planning in 1943 and made it clear in the Town and Country Planning Act of the following year that it favoured the dispersal of industry and people to new towns or expanded country towns some distance from their parent cities. The great plans which Sir Patrick Abercrombie prepared for London and Greater London were a brilliant and imaginative interpretation of this policy of dispersal.

To relieve the congestion of London and enable its "blitzed" and "blighted" areas to be redeveloped at densities which would allow for good living conditions and reasonable standards of open space, the Greater London Plan laid down that about 1,200,000 people would have to move out from London. After consultations between the Advisory Committee on London Regional Planning, the interdepartmental committee which considered the Greater London Plans, and the Minister, it was agreed that of this considerable total 300,000 people should go to the *new* towns, 800,000 to expanded towns or villages in the outer country belt, whilst the remaining 100,000 should follow industry to the special development areas in other parts of the country.

In 1945 the New Towns Committee was set up under Lord Reith to suggest the guiding principles by which the new towns should be "established and developed as self-contained and balanced communities for work and living", and following its Report in 1946 the New Towns Act was passed authorising the setting up of Development Corporations. The Distribution of Industry Act 1945 and the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 completed the legislative framework for the new planning.

The argument for the new towns may be stated quite simply. It has changed little in the half century since Howard first enunciated it, except that the threat to all civilisation from atomic war has added a dread new urgency to the need for a real policy of dispersal. There are still three ways in which city development and growth may occur. If we are to clear the decaying slums at the centre and the acres of mean and blighted streets in the inner suburbs, some place has to be found for their displaced and surplus population. The first solution is to build splendid blocks of multi-storey flats at the centre. Architecturally magnificent, they are

nevertheless an unsound environment for that great primary purpose of human activity, the nurture of family life and the raising of children.*

The second solution is to continue the old policy of building housing estates on the fringe of our cities, eating up their green belts, denying to multitudes their heritage of access to the countryside, intensifying transport problems and creating the old discredited dormitory suburbs with their lack of community life and civic sense. We may, as in the case of London, be driven to the desperate expediency of carrying out both of these policies simultaneously. Nevertheless, both are intrinsically unsound. There remains the third choice—the policy of planned dispersal of both industry and people to new towns within the parent city's region but beyond its green belt. The choice is actually a double one for we may either build new towns or bring industry and people to existing small country towns in the region which *require* and *wish* for an orderly expansion.† We have now to consider in the present study the social and community problems inherent in the creation of “new towns”.

*It is significant that a Government Committee has now been appointed to examine the social problems of families living in large blocks of flats—problems which are likely to grow in intensity and magnitude as we continue to “pyramid our mistakes to heaven”.

†Some of the problems raised by this latter solution are dealt with in an earlier study in this series *Small Towns: Their Social and Community Problems*. N.C.S.S.

LEARNING FROM THE PAST—THE GARDEN CITIES
OF LETCHWORTH AND WELWYN

Pioneer days—financial difficulties—lack of public support—the community spirit—the “great divide”—open space planning—success of industrial policy—the shopping dilemma—social structure and development—public relations—effects on rural life.

ONE of the greatest difficulties in the founding of the new towns is that there are so few precedents to help us and so little experience upon which to draw. This sense of venturing into unknown and uncharted seas is at the same time one of the great attractions. However, there are to guide us the twin beacons of Letchworth and Welwyn, the two garden cities which were planned as working models to demonstrate universally applicable principles of town growth and building. Any consideration of the planning of new towns would be quite incomplete without reference to the story of the first two garden cities. This would have been even more valuable had their documentation been more complete. But the pioneers who steered these frail craft through the stormy seas of their inception were in the main too preoccupied on the bridge to keep an elaborate log of events. Hence we still await a real history of these two great experiments in town building.*

Here then is no history of the garden cities, nor even a critical appraisal of their achievements and failures. All I have attempted is to select those aspects of the story which seem to me to have peculiar relevance to the problems of social and community development in the new towns.

Both Letchworth and Welwyn, the former founded in 1903 and the latter in 1920, suffered from similar problems in their early stages. It was the intention of the private companies which developed them to demonstrate not merely the soundness of Ebenezer Howard's town planning principles, but also that the

*C. B. Purdom's massive work *The Building of Satellite Towns*, written in 1925, ends almost at the beginning of the Welwyn story, whilst F. J. Osborn's eminently readable *Green Belt Cities* and *New Towns after the War*, despite the light they throw on the difficulties, problems and achievements of the two garden cities, do not set out to be documented histories. I have, however, drawn extensively on both these sources and I am indebted to them and to the Welwyn Survey of 1939 for much of the information which follows.

towns could pay their way as sound financial as well as social investments. Their principle was the revolutionary one that dividends should be limited and all profits arising from increases of land value should be utilised for the development of the town and the benefit of its inhabitants. The austerity of a financial policy which drove them to attempt to pay off from current revenue the heavy costs of capital development incurred in the early stages of the town, produced the usual vicious circle of under-capitalisation. The early struggles and difficulties arose largely from this lack of working capital which slowed the pace of development and drove the companies to many desperate economies and improvisations. Welwyn, founded in the boom years after the first world war, suffered also from inflated building costs and crippling loan charges. As pioneer ventures both schemes had to contend against much misunderstanding, scepticism, apathy and the opposition of vested interests. Moreover there were in the day of their founding neither subsidies nor Government grants to ease their burden. There was instead official opposition, although on occasions this was turned to good account. At the height of the housing crisis in 1919 the Garden Cities Association pleaded with the Government, on the experience of Letchworth, to consider a solution of the housing problem by the founding of new industrial towns on garden city lines. Dr. Addison, President of the Local Government Board, turned down the proposal on the grounds that houses must be provided first, regardless of where they might be. It was this, perhaps inevitable, but nevertheless short-sighted policy of expedience which opened the flood-gates for the tide of bricks and mortar which was to flow out in uncontrolled suburban sprawl throughout the inter-war years, instead of being canalised into new satellite towns. At the same time, as a small but significant compensation, it led to the founding of Welwyn Garden City in 1920, as Howard, disillusioned by official apathy, went ahead and with the help of friends bought the land for the new town on a site which, fortuitously, came into the market just at the right moment.

In other ways too, official housing policy worked against the garden cities. Both of them urgently needed help to provide working-class houses for their new industries. Even Welwyn in 1920 could only *hope* that such provision might be made by the local authority in whose area the new town lay, since the official assumption was that no such need could exist in garden cities. At Welwyn the Company had to bear the burden of the first working-class housing scheme and both towns have suffered from the difficulty of providing enough low-cost housing. In fact the only way of

getting started at Welwyn was by building middle-class houses for those still working in London, and who, at a time of great shortage, were attracted by the excellent living conditions offered by the garden city. In such circumstances it was not easy to build up a socially balanced population.

Whilst the new movement avoided the worst difficulties of political controversy, and outright opposition was rare, the biggest difficulty was scepticism. Hardly anyone believed these towns had a future and there were few business men who were prepared to take the financial risks involved in providing services in advance of established needs. The railway company failed to provide adequate services; traders were reluctant to open shops; the Co-operative Society failed to respond to Howard's invitation; and at Welwyn the Company, in an endeavour to provide reasonable shopping facilities whilst at the same time conserving site values, had no alternative to embarking on a somewhat controversial experiment in monopoly trading to which reference will be made later.

These setbacks and difficulties certainly involved the early residents in some hard pioneering. But there is little doubt that these hardships, voluntarily accepted (people *chose* to go to Welwyn) and shared by all, brought people together and helped to make them a community. Letchworth began on a wave of idealism and here particularly the sense that they were taking part in a great experiment in town building permeated the life of the town and helped to create civic unity.

This sense of civic unity was encouraged by the town plan devised by Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker, for there are no obviously self-contained neighbourhoods. Instead the town is focused on its civic centre where most of the community services are concentrated. (There are some subsidiary centres with a few shops: churches, halls, tennis courts and club rooms are distributed over the town.)

The Welwyn plan was greatly influenced by the fact that the main railway line bisects the site. It thus affords a classic instance of the manner in which physical features condition and determine social development. To the east of the line lies the factory area and most of the smaller houses held on weekly rentals. To the west lies the civic and shopping centre and most of the larger owner-occupied houses. This "Great Divide", the railway line, has thus, despite the intentions of the planners, succeeded in splitting the town into two distinct social semi-circles, and as we shall see when we come to consider the plans of the Development Corporation of the new town, one of its problems will be to redress the social balance. At the same time it is probably fair to say that there is

rather less segregation than in the average town. Varying income groups are to be found in the same vicinity even though not in the same street.

Notable features of both towns are their considerable degree of architectural control, and their open planning, splendid landscaping and extensive tree planting which with the passing of time has given their residential areas an appearance of mellow rusticity. Both would appear to have solved the difficult problem of maintaining grass verges even in areas of fairly extensive use. Vandalism has been rare, and the standard of public care of amenities so high that open forecourts and unfenced front gardens were possible and could add grace and dignity to the lines of urban streets. All the efforts of planners and architects however failed to popularise the terrace house. Such is the desire for at least three private walls that houses in the centre of terraces were difficult to sell or had to be let at reduced rentals, a fact which might be noted by new town planners who must build for a future, remote as it may seem at present, in which consumer choice may once again be a deciding factor.

At Welwyn, space for children's play was wisely interspersed among the groups of small garden houses, while bigger playing fields for football and cricket were laid out on the outskirts. Small areas of woodland came right into the town. Letchworth with 240 acres of open space in 1939 (13 acres per thousand of the population) appeared to have generous provision, but experience at Welwyn goes to show that with good provision the demand tends to grow and that anything less than 10 acres per thousand (exclusive of school sites) may well fail to meet future needs. Much however will depend on the nature of the provision and its location in relation to housing layout as we shall see later.

Even if the first two garden cities failed to come up to some of their promoters' ideals, they did at least demonstrate their ability to attract and retain a wide variety of well balanced industry so that they both became essentially manufacturing towns. Attracted by low rents and rates, good working and excellent living conditions for their workers, many firms moved in, mostly from the London area, some to build their own factories, others to rent factory space. There was room too for expansion. One firm which started in rented space with three employees, grew till it employed over a thousand. But none grew so large as to dominate the town. The manufacturers who came to Letchworth refer enthusiastically to the good effects on their workers—the healthy living and working conditions, the doubling of leisure through the absence of travelling, the consequent punctuality and reduction of absenteeism, and

the fact that in a small town there was less estrangement between worker and employer. On the other hand those who had to recruit much local labour observed that country people were harder to train for factory jobs; others noted that whilst the married men with families settled happily, the younger single men tended to yearn for the bright lights of the city. In addition it was felt that a bigger town with more industry would have offered wider choices to both workers and employers. It is most significant however that the industrialists, almost without exception, agreed that on balance, industry could be more efficiently conducted in a small town like Letchworth.

Shops have an important influence on social development. Both Letchworth and Welwyn gave much thought to the almost impossible problem of providing adequate shopping facilities for an expanding population, avoiding wasteful competition from an excess of shops, whilst at the same time endeavouring to conserve for the benefit of the community the important increases in site value of these shops. Howard's idea for Letchworth had been a glass arcade around the central park — a combination of shopping centre and winter garden which he hoped would become "one of the most favourite resorts of the townspeople". Instead a more orthodox shopping centre evolved along traditional lines, starting from a sub-post-office and general store. There were however important innovations. A ban on trading from private houses was the first example of the practical application of the new principle of zoning for use, and prevented the traditional scattering of shops over the town. All but a handful were located at the town centre. This undoubtedly helped to focus the life of the town on its civic and shopping centre. It also helped to limit the number of shops thus avoiding wasteful duplication. In 1924 there was one shop for every 88 of the population compared with the County of London average of one for 57. But site values were not conserved nor was a good shopping service established. In the early years there were complaints of high prices and even in 1914 a large proportion of purchases was made in the surrounding towns.

This experience at Letchworth had been noted by the Welwyn planners who were in any case handicapped by the unwillingness of traders to open shops before the future of the town was secure. They therefore founded a subsidiary company to run a departmental store at the town centre to provide an overall shopping service. The Welwyn Stores was given a ten-year monopoly. Townspeople were encouraged to take shares, dividends were limited, and, as with the parent company, profits were to assist the

development of the town. From the outset this experiment aroused controversy, its supporters upholding it as an essential community service whilst its opponents regarded it as a "monopolistic tyrant". Four branches in different parts of the town were established and in 1930 the strict monopoly was broken by allowing a limited number of competitive traders to take premises on short leases. In 1945 the Stores accounted for half the retail turnover of the town, although there were by this time nearly 40 shops. If its economic and trading record purely as a shopping service can be challenged, its *social* value would still merit serious consideration.*

From the outset it has been much more than a mere market; it has been the main rendezvous; its public hall was used for dances, concerts, and public meetings—an invaluable service in a new community. Equally useful was its founding of a local newspaper and the provision of an information office for the new residents.

To-day the siting of schools is seen to be of paramount importance in community planning. Although both garden cities were much in advance of their time, the standards which they set have been superseded by those required under the new Education Act. Letchworth County Grammar School was placed at the centre near to the public library, museum, and swimming pool, whereas that at Welwyn is on the outskirts.

It is impossible in this brief outline to do justice to the unique social structure of the two garden cities, but in order to understand their problems it will be helpful to consider first the people who went there, the institutions which they found, including the pattern of local government, those institutions which were provided for them and those which they created themselves, and in addition, their relations with the Company and with each other.

Many factors went to the making of Letchworth's unusual social climate. There was the upsurge of creative idealism which was responsible for this first attempt to build a model town. In such a climate, new ideas in architecture, art, education and many other branches of human activity flourished and gave rise to new societies. With so many strong individualists, it is not surprising that to the outsider Letchworth acquired a reputation for harbouring "cranks"—a reputation enhanced by two other characteristics to which reference will have to be made later—its attempts to control all

*The Welwyn Survey of 1939 showed that 29 per cent complained that food was too expensive, 8.5 per cent complained of monopoly generally, and 25.8 per cent suggested more shops. It is most important, however, to note that this survey was made before the Stores opened its magnificent new premises, thus improving its services considerably. There seems little doubt that the inhabitants of Welwyn *believed* that the costs of living there were high, attributing it largely to the monopoly of the Stores.

architectural design and its refusal to allow any licensed premises in the town.

Welwyn tended to be a dormitory until its industries were established. Both towns attracted youngish people of initiative who chose to settle there; these were balanced by a leaven of older and retired people able to give of their leisure and experience to the building of the life of the community. Each had its full quota of those seeking health in better surroundings. Although the garden cities claimed to have a reasonable cross section of the national population, certain groups were over-represented whilst certain others were missing. Extremes of wealth and poverty were conspicuously absent, the latter because the companies had discouraged industries which required large concentrations of unskilled labour. The high proportion of middle-class residents with stable incomes and ample leisure provided leadership and support out of all proportion to their numerical strength and this would appear to account for the unusual wealth of social institutions which grew up. Another factor which aided both community development and social cohesion in these new towns was the fact that heads of business and industry lived in the towns, identifying themselves with their aspirations and struggles—a notable reversal of the trend of the times in older towns and cities. In such pioneer communities all sorts and conditions of people were drawn together and thrown very much on their own resources. But there was an abundance of leadership, initiative and talent, and the companies, recognising the need, saw that some temporary meeting places were available from the earliest days.*

It is not surprising that cultural institutions—particularly in connection with drama—grew and multiplied, that church life was strong, political activity intense, and that social and sports groups flourished. It is important to remember that these institutions were built up at a time when statutory help and encouragement was negligible; nor were there the rich benefactors whose wealth had endowed and supported so many of the social institutions of the older towns. The thriving social life of these new towns drew its inspiration and support from the latent resources of voluntary activity. In other places—the great housing estates—growing up at the same time, these resources so often lay untapped for the lack of anywhere for the people to meet, or frustrated from lack of leadership implicit in one-class housing schemes.

*At Welwyn a Restaurant Company was formed even before the Building Company, and a restaurant opened opposite the temporary station to serve visitors and to be a social centre for the town. In addition an army hut which formed a wing of the Company's offices was used for meetings, dances and parties.

But for the pioneers at Letchworth and Welwyn these were the golden days; the inevitable snobbery and segregation did not come till later when the towns had grown bigger and the early struggles were only dim memories of the past.

The garden cities were essentially "family" towns. Men with the stabilising influences of home, family and garden, settled happily, rejoicing to see their children growing up sturdily in such healthy conditions. Single men in lodgings and some of the younger people did not share this enthusiasm. They found the towns dull and stodgy, lacking the brittle glamour of the great cities with their abundance of passive and commercially provided entertainment. It is true that Letchworth had two cinemas and Welwyn one. The latter was however badly placed to serve the needs of those who most desired it. Further light on this charge of dullness is given by the Welwyn Survey of 1939 to which we shall come in a moment.

In the case of Letchworth such a charge might well have arisen from the fact that having been the scene of an experiment in temperance reform, the town had no public houses except those already in the villages on the outskirts. Local opinion consulted by means of a series of referendums consistently opposed the establishment of licensed houses even after the failure of the "Skittles Inn"—an experiment with a non-licensed "public house" as a social centre. Welwyn adopted a very different policy, the "Carlisle" system with a limited number of "state" houses which had to sell food as well as drink.

The Survey *Life and Work in Welwyn Garden City** to which reference has already been made, throws much valuable light on the town as it had become by 1939, upon its social institutions and the attitudes of its people. The household questionnaire was however confined to a sample of families living in the weekly-rented houses and its results cannot therefore be regarded as typical of the whole town. By the time this survey was made, the early dormitory character of the town had completely changed. It was now largely self-contained both as regards industry and social life and the proportion of unskilled workers had risen to about a quarter. On entertainment and amenities the survey is enlightening; 6 per cent said there was enough entertainment but 16 per cent suggested a second cinema on the east side of the railway line. (At that time Welwyn had one cinema for 15,000 people whereas the national average was one for 8,500. But the most important factor was that the cinema was about a mile from the main working-class housing

*A survey made by Jaqueline Tyrwhitt for Welwyn Garden City, Ltd., 1939. (Now difficult to obtain.)

area.) The second most popular suggestion was an indoor swimming bath, for which over 11 per cent asked. Most curiously, there was no demand at all for this facility from those who came originally from Wales or Scotland! Even more surprising was the fact that, in a garden city renowned for its generous planning of open space, 8 per cent asked for a park. Here again the division of the town into two social semi-circles by the railway was the cause of this demand. To the north-west lay a fine stretch of semi-wild woodland ideal as a natural park. But again it was on the wrong side of the line and over a mile from the areas whose need for it was greatest. Moreover it was of little use either for mothers with prams or for the old who complained of "nowhere to go when you go for a walk". In addition to this demand for a park there were requests for a sports ground, bandstand, open tennis courts, bowling green and sailing pool. If these demands are added to those for a park, their proportion exceeds those asking for a second cinema. Three of these projects were planned or in hand when the survey was made. Some decline in the strength of football and cricket clubs was suspected but the evidence was inconclusive. At that time a national survey of leisure pursuits by the National Institute of Industrial Psychology had revealed a decline in organised team games counterbalanced by a far greater increase in individual sports such as cycling, swimming, golf and tennis.

There were reported to be some 20 active social clubs and societies with regular weekly meetings (this figure included Youth Organisations), with a total membership of about 1,500. Of these nearly 800 belonged to an unlicensed Working Men's Club which was open daily. These were the main organisations catering for day-to-day social needs but there was in addition a wide variety of organisations meeting less frequently and catering mainly for the well-to-do. It was computed that Welwyn had about 7,500 adults earning less than £250 p.a. of whom about 20 per cent belonged to some sort of club. The Household Questionnaire revealed no marked demand for club facilities—rather less than for other forms of leisure. At the same time, 3 per cent of all the households stated that there was "nothing for the young people to do". "Lovely for the children, but there's nothing after they leave school" was another typical comment.

There was little doubt that the general planning of the town was widely appreciated; 22 per cent stated in effect that Welwyn was "a very pretty place, a lovely place to live in and that everything was so beautifully laid out". The lessons of the "Great Divide" did not pass unnoticed; it was felt that the provision of some centre of universal attraction such as a swimming bath on the east side instead of at the town centre might avoid the obvious dangers of

providing duplicate amenities which might only perpetuate the town's division.

From the outset the towns encountered difficulties in connection with local government. At Letchworth there were three parishes, each with its meeting, in addition to the Rural District Council. The slow machinery of registration delayed the early settlers from obtaining a vote and a Residents' Council was set up, as an advisory body. In 1907 the parishes were unified with a new council of 15 members and in 1919 the town attained the status of an Urban District. There was no official machinery for co-operation between the Company and the new U.D.C. but they endeavoured to keep in touch with each other by a series of quarterly meetings. This was not altogether satisfactory and profiting by this experience it was decided that at Welwyn the local authority should have representation on the board of the company. C. B. Purdom writing in 1925* thought that a joint committee with equal representation would have avoided administrative duplication and secured both economy and greater efficiency.

Considering the enormous powers concentrated in the hands of the developing Companies, their relationships with the inhabitants were surprisingly good. The reasons why their benevolent despotism was rarely resented are of importance to the planners of the new towns. In the first place it would appear that there was some appreciation particularly among the early residents of the aims and ideals of the garden city and a respect for the disinterested motives of the pioneers. In addition, a tradition of open and healthy criticism was encouraged by the Companies through public meetings and in the local press, as for instance in the series of referendums on the subject of public houses in Letchworth. Furthermore, officials and directors of the Companies themselves lived in the towns sharing their early discomforts and difficulties. One of the main sources of criticism at Letchworth arose from the efforts to enforce some measure of architectural control and to uphold leasehold covenants such as those which prohibited the use of private houses for shops and other business purposes. At Welwyn criticism centred round the shopping monopoly of the Welwyn Stores, and the lack of amenities on the east side of the town.

Finally we must consider briefly the effect of the garden cities on agriculture and their rural areas as one of the main objects of the movement was to stem the decay and depopulation of the countryside by building up a healthy pattern of interrelated town and country. It was hoped to do this by providing a ready market close

**The Building of Satellite Towns*

at hand (without expensive transport) for the cultivator; by establishing agriculture as a vital permanency on the outskirts of the town and redeeming it from a precarious existence as "building land ripe for development". When Letchworth was founded its farms were poor and neglected; rents were low; there was little rural employment and wages and conditions were bad. Just over twenty years later C. B. Purdom was able to record* that the agricultural population had increased, wages had risen, that some social life was available for the farm labourer whose conditions now approximated to those of the town worker and that the surrounding villages shared in this new prosperity. Meanwhile the children of Letchworth were growing up in contact with nature, the seasons and the great elemental processes of life. Dairy farming, fruit growing and market gardening proved to be the most successful form of agriculture, but it was a great disappointment to some of the founders of the garden cities that so many of the individual and co-operative small-holding schemes failed to survive despite all the encouragement given to them.

**The Building of Satellite Towns.*

CHAPTER III

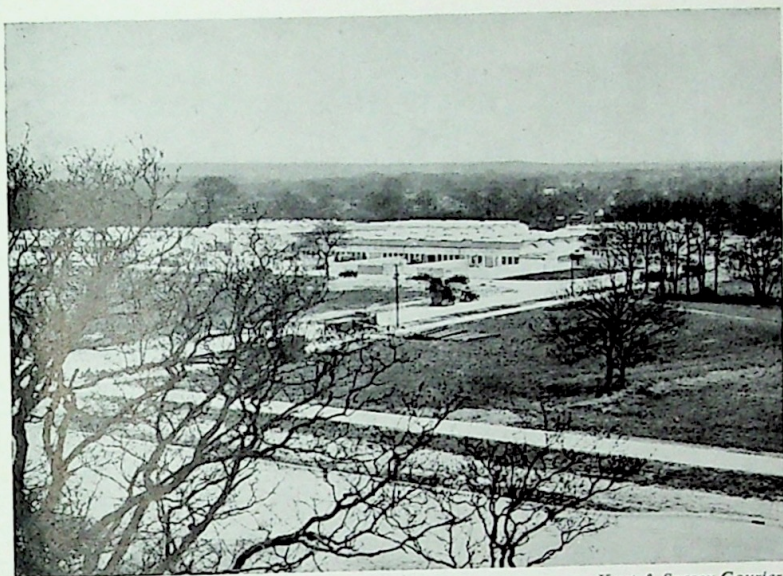
A GLANCE ROUND THE NEW TOWNS

Aycliffe — Basildon — Crawley — East Kilbride — Harlow — Hemel Hempstead — Peterlee — Stevenage — Welwyn/Hatfield — other new towns and "quasi-satellites".

IN Section II we shall be considering in principle the social problems of the New Towns and the unique opportunities they present for the development of living communities. Here it will be convenient to summarise briefly the location, the primary reasons for their building, and the main characteristics of the new towns so far designated.

Aycliffe (Durham) just off the Great North Road seven miles north of Darlington is the smallest with an intended population of only about 10,000.* It differs from all the other new towns in that it is an entirely virgin site adjacent to a trading estate with some fifty factories but with no housing. The town plan symbolises the aims of the Corporation—to retain some of the advantages of country life within an urban setting, to avoid social segregation and to create a "family town" with "a high priority on the happiness of wives and children". So the smallest unit of the plan is the "housing precinct"—about 100 houses of varying types grouped around a green—somewhat after the traditional village pattern but without through traffic. Safe and suitable playing space close at hand, labour saving houses, shops, schools (including, it is hoped, nursery schools) within easy reach, are all part of the plan to put "women and children first". Six precincts are grouped together to form a ward; each ward is to have its own shopping centre, Post Office, public house, and, according to requirements, church, chapel, club, branch library or meeting hall. The town is built up of five wards and a General Section or Town Centre. Aycliffe's special problem, shared to some degree by all the other new towns, is that it has no funds other than its rents to meet the costs of what is a great social experiment—the creation of good living conditions. On a virgin site of this kind with the Trading Estate lying just outside

*This may be considerably increased in the light of revised estimates of the industrial capacity of the Aycliffe Trading Estate. Plans are therefore being kept flexible, but there is some fear that such an increase might jeopardise the whole basis of the present plans.



Kent & Sussex Courier

Crawley's social progress will be built up on its industrial prosperity. These fine modern factory units are already in full production.



Photoflight

The first new neighbourhood at Hemel Hempstead, with the old town in the background and the countryside all around.



The Housing Manager may be the first friend the new resident makes.



Dada Film Unit

New residents receive a warm welcome at a social at the Green Hills Club, Hemel Hempstead.

the designated area there is no General Rate fund to assist development. This problem of rents we shall meet repeatedly particularly as it is further aggravated by the fact that the new towns are subject to the operation of the Rent Restrictions Act.

Basildon (Essex) which lies between Southend and Upminster has probably the largest designated area, 5 miles long and 3 wide, stretching from Laindon to Pitsea. It is being built to relieve the congestion of the East London boroughs and to provide some focus and amenities for the 25,000 people in the present scattered villages and hamlets in the area. Here is a problem in striking contrast with Aycliffe, for instead of a virgin site the area contains some of the worst stretches of unregulated urban development of the inter-war years — a haphazard and incoherent jumble of bungalows, shacks and small-holdings, many without gas, electricity, piped water or sewerage, where every winter turns the unmade roads into quagmires of clay. Public relations are helped by the fact that it was county and local authorities who requested the Minister to include this area, whose community and planning problems appeared almost beyond solution, within the new town. Whilst the present inhabitants welcome the vastly improved services which the new town will bring, many who are retired, pensioners, or small-holders, doubt their ability to pay for them; many others are apprehensive lest the advent of the new town deprives them of their free-holds. It is now hoped to get Government approval to plan for a town of 80,000 rather than 50,000.

Crawley (Sussex) will take industry and people specially from south London. Administrative problems are accentuated by its situation at the junction of three counties. The beauty of its surrounding countryside and the excellence of its rail and road communications have encouraged a certain amount of dispersed, low-density dormitory development; only 4,000 of the 9,000 people who live in the designated area reside in Crawley itself. It is already a shopping centre and it has some community tradition—there is a strong Community Association already established—and the town may well be able to withstand the pull of both London and Brighton and build up an active life of its own.

East Kilbride, one of the two Scottish new towns, lies only 9 miles south-east of Glasgow in agricultural country which escaped the worst consequences of the industrial revolution. It is a small town of 3,000 inhabitants, rich in history and tradition and with a lively community life of its own. It is being built to relieve the chronic congestion and the housing shortage of Glasgow and neighbouring

Lanarkshire, and to provide new industries in the Clyde Valley region. It lies in a Development Area under the Distribution of Industry Act, 1945. Already there are many thousands of applicants on its housing list. Here again the problem of rent levels is an acute one, for many of the families in most urgent need will scarcely be able to afford the rents which the Corporation will be forced to charge if the town is to pay its way. The plan provides for not more than 50,000 people in four main neighbourhoods, with further sub-division into smaller communities of about 500 houses each. Two such small housing groups would be served by a primary school lying between them. The percentage of flats (about one third) and terrace houses (about one half) is higher than in the English towns, but this is in keeping with the Scottish tradition. A Community Association has recently been formed; before long it is hoped to provide accommodation for community purposes in the block of shops to be erected in the town centre.

Harlow, in the north-west corner of Essex, is one of the towns where the planners have been able to start with a comparatively clean sheet for the area has less than 5,000 inhabitants. The site is one of great natural beauty; woodland, streams and valley are all used as integral parts of the master-plan. The actual neighbourhoods are planned fairly "tightly", the space thus saved being used to increase the breadth of the green wedges which divide the neighbourhoods, so adding to the beauty of the landscape. For a town of only 3,000 old Harlow has a great variety of social institutions, nearly all of them affiliated to the Community Association. Harlow's urgent need is to attract industry.

Hemel Hempstead, 25 miles north-west of London, presents problems different from all the other new towns for it is a municipal borough, has over 22,000 inhabitants and a history going back to pre-Roman days. Here is no simple task of building in open country but the infinitely more complex task of re-developing an ancient town much of which is nearly worn out, and expanding it by new development to about 60,000. Physical, economic and social problems are all acute; narrow valleys and steep hillsides with high windswept plateaux between; unbalanced industry requiring a disproportionate number of both unskilled and female workers; a middle-class dormitory element whose loyalties and interests are divided between London and the home town; all the prejudice engendered by the possibility of some eventual demolition with its unsettling effect on local interests; the difficulty of reconciling existing interests focused in the Town Council whose functions appear at first sight to clash with the overriding activities of the new

Development Corporation. But there are important compensations to offset some of these difficulties. Not only has the town enough of the apparatus of community life—shops, pubs, churches, cinemas and football teams—to provide at least a dim reflection of the city lights which the incomers will have left behind them, but it is already big enough to support undertakings which none of the other new towns is likely to be able to afford for some years. Commercial entrepreneurs such as cinema exhibitors and the bigger shops are already prepared to build immediately material and labour is available, whilst major social amenities such as a large hall, main library, are also early possibilities. The provision of a lively town centre is a great attraction which in practice is likely to offset many of the early difficulties which Hemel Hempstead has had to overcome.

Peterlee, the other new town in Durham, is also to be built on a virgin site on the East Durham coalfield in the Rural District of Easington, the largest rural district in the country. The area contains a number of small depressing mining villages isolated from each other, where worn-out cottages crouch alongside the smoking slagheaps. Although individual villages have some social life of their own they are really too small to support the amenities expected to-day. Nor is there any town large enough to give life, focus and urban amenities to the area. Its economy, based entirely on coal, is vulnerable to trade fluctuations and hopelessly unbalanced with little opportunity of employment either for women or for men unable to work in the pits. Despite considerable outward migration there is overcrowding and much sub-standard housing. All these facts were brought to light by the Easington Rural District Council's report, *Farewell to Squalor*. It was their suggestion that the new town should be built, and it was a team of local housewives with some expert help and guidance who carried out the social survey which established the urgency of the need and the nature of the problems.*

The new town is fittingly named in honour of one of the greatest of the Durham miners' leaders, Peter Lee. As much of the area is subject to subsidence, underground and overground planning must be integrated (it is this difficulty which has retarded progress so far). Once again the difficulty of rent levels will arise as many of the miners' cottages, bad as they were, were nearly rent free. Now too there will be new problems of transport for work will no longer be on the doorstep. Nor will it be easy for a proud and exclusive community to throw open its doors to welcome that diversity of outsiders necessary to create a socially balanced town with some

*See *New Town for Old*, by Helen Rankin. Bureau of Current Affairs, Pamphlet No. 75, March 1949.

variety of industry. Indeed it seems clear that the miners and their wives would much prefer to keep the town to themselves.

Stevenage, a pleasant little town about thirty miles from London on the Great North Road, was the first of the new towns to be designated. It therefore bore the full brunt of the prejudice and misunderstanding inevitable when a new idea impinges on old interests. Among its 7,000 inhabitants it was only natural that there would be those who, viewing with dismay the prospect of an invasion of industry and people from London would, with a real love of their town, band themselves together to protect the charm of its old High Street with its gracious Georgian buildings and old coaching inns. This opposition certainly resulted in much delay and frustration (the legal struggle was carried right up to the House of Lords). Public and local government relations should be helped by the fact that three of the present members of the Corporation reside in Stevenage and one is a member of both the Stevenage U.D.C. and the Herts County Council.

Features of the Stevenage plan are the wide variety in size of gardens, balanced by the grouping of houses round "garden commons", an experiment to encourage a functional rather than a purely decorative use of open space.

Welwyn and Hatfield (Herts) is the scene of an interesting and unusual experiment in new town planning. Welwyn, whose earlier history as one of the two pioneer garden cities we traced in Chapter II, has now been officially designated as a new town linked with its near neighbour, Hatfield. Although they are to remain separated by a green belt, they will be developed as "twin towns". Each has its own Planner and Corporation but the personnel of the Corporations is identical. The two towns, however, differ profoundly. It is hoped that they will develop as two separate and independent parts of one balanced and harmonious unit. Hatfield is old, rich in historic associations but lacking in either social integration or industrial balance. (The De Havilland works there employs about the same number as the present population of the town.) Welwyn is new, the carefully planned creation of recent years, so its new plan can be the fulfilment of the original concept with adjustments made to counteract the social division caused by the great barrier of the railway. The ultimate total population of the two towns is to be just over 60,000, with about 36,000 at Welwyn and 25,000 at Hatfield, but the plans have been left as flexible as possible to allow for any necessary adjustment in these respective proportions. Both towns have all the industry they require at present; their urgent need is for housing.

Other New Towns. In addition to the new towns described in the foregoing outline, four others have been added to the list, to which only brief reference can be made. Glenrothes in Fifeshire is specifically designed to accommodate miners transferring from the worked-out Lanarkshire pits; but it is to be a balanced town with only about one-third of its population comprised of mining families. Corby, the town which sprang up round one of the great Northamptonshire steel works and now has a population of about 14,000 is to be expanded to 40,000. Bracknell in Berkshire between Ascot and Wokingham is to be another London satellite although on a much smaller scale than originally contemplated. Cwmbran, the only new town so far designated in Wales is to serve the developing industries in the valley between Newport (Mon.) and Pontypool, where the present population is to be increased to about 35,000.

No mention has been made in this summary of the ring of "quasi-satellites" now being built by the London County Council on the outer fringes of London. Although they represent a complete contradiction of the new towns policy, they have important lessons for the new-town planners, to which reference will be made in Section II. In the same way, Wythenshawe (Manchester) has much valuable experience to contribute to our knowledge, but it cannot really be classed as a new town in the accepted sense, for the green belt which separates it from the parent city is negligible and the area includes a large inter-war housing estate of the traditional pattern of the period.

SECTION II

Problems of Social and Community Development

PEOPLE AND PLANS

Effects of physical planning on community development: neighbourhood planning, siting of schools, neighbourhood centres—typical plans and unsuspected difficulties, neighbourhoods without centres, the dividing effect of neighbourhood planning — shopping problems. *Balanced communities for work and living*: industrial balance—social balance and the selection of tenants; "Mixed Development"—experimental layouts: the Aycliffe "village greens"—danger of industrial enclaves—estimating housing needs, houses and flats.

Public Relations: welcoming the stranger — contribution of community association, Press.

For the People—by the People: planning and the public, dangers of remote control—can the citizen help to plan his environment?—ways, means and some difficulties—contribution of Community Associations and Councils of Social Service—"Too many masters"—administrative problems, the need for action.

The Effect of Physical Planning on Community Development

AS this is only an interim study we shall be concerned with the early stages of development in the new towns, but at the same time we shall always have to remind ourselves of the longer range objectives. Because the new towns are a splendid and visionary concept they have encouraged a great deal of wishful thinking. Here it is hoped to present a sober and practical picture of what is happening now and what is likely to happen in the first stages of development, as seen against the realities of the present shortages and setbacks, the difficulties of attracting the right variety of industry, or a socially balanced population, or of providing even the most elementary community facilities. Against such a background of unsolved problems and financial retrenchment, what are the essential priorities? If further cuts have to be made, what can be sacrificed without prejudicing the future of this whole great social experiment?

It may well be that social planning as a science is being overdone. Few of us are ever entirely convinced that the delicate balance of human relationships can be scientifically analysed and reduced to statistical tables. But we cannot help noting with grave concern the tendency to disband Social Development Departments in the new towns. The case for such action is admirably expressed in the Stevenage Report for 1950:

"This department was, as the New Towns Committee recommended, set up when the Corporation was first formed, to undertake social and economic research on problems affecting the town's development, to deal with problems of public relations and to plan for the social integration of the new community. The department did a great deal of very valuable research both in connection with the Master Plan and on problems of long-term social development; but experience has shown that, after the initial period of planning, responsibility is better devolved upon other departments which are more directly concerned. At the same time it became clear that both public relations and social development in the broad sense involved, on the one hand, matters of policy which must be a direct concern of the Corporation and its chief executive, and, on the other hand, that every department must concern itself with the social implications of every technical decision. In fact, social development is not a thing apart and must be the direct concern of every one of the Corporation's officers."*

Now whilst this sounds excellent in theory we may well ask ourselves if it is a practical policy. Can we be so sure that busy officials overloaded with the cares of their own departments, will always foresee the social consequences and implications of every technical decision which their departments take? And that which in theory is everyone's responsibility may all too easily become the concern of none. We expect every department in the new towns to be concerned with keeping down costs. But we do not therefore disband the Finance Department or dismiss the Treasurer. Great sums of money will be spent on research in engineering and building techniques but apparently the even more delicate and complex problem of building living communities of people must again be left to solve itself. One would have thought that with all the lessons of the housing estates before us—including even the post-war examples of which such high hopes were entertained—we should have realised that this may prove a very costly "economy". And if it is admitted that the social development departments did such excellent and invaluable work in the early stages of planning, it should be remembered that many of the basic assumptions upon which they founded their calculations have since been abandoned or so seriously modified that a great deal of re-thinking will be required. It would have been more understandable had everything been going according to plan, but we know this is far from being the case. Already some of the major pre-requisites of healthy social development have been endangered or indefinitely postponed by recurrent economic crises—balanced industry and population and the provision of community facilities. Nor would it seem a particularly opportune moment, just as the new towns are getting into their stride, to dispense with public relations staff, whose functions were often combined with social development, but to this we shall return later.

*Stevenage Report in *Reports of New Towns Corporations*. H.M.S.O. 1950.

Throughout this study we shall constantly be reminded of the extent to which community development is governed and conditioned by physical planning—the nature of the housing layout, the size, type and characteristics of the neighbourhood units and their relation to the town centre and the town as a whole, the siting of industry, schools and open spaces and the planning of transport and communications. Each of these we shall have to consider, but it would be well to turn our attention first to the neighbourhood unit as the basis of modern town planning. The evolution of the theory of neighbourhood planning was dealt with in some detail in the first booklet in this series.* As we saw there the theory was accepted almost uncritically because it appeared to be the answer to so many problems, and it became the universally accepted basis of modern town planning. But the theory remains untried as no complete unit has yet been built. Although much of post-war housing conforms, on paper, to the principles of neighbourhood planning, community buildings are still for the most part represented by empty sites, and it has therefore been confidently expected that the first practical experience would be gained in the new towns. Even here, however, there is at present no assurance that any one unit will for some long time to come be sufficiently complete, with its own community buildings, to afford any adequate working demonstration to prove or disprove the theories of this form of planning.

In its simplest form neighbourhood planning involves dividing the residential area of a town into small well-defined units of about 5/10,000 people, in such a way that through traffic skirts round the unit on main roads which together with green “wedges” and parkways help to form its boundaries. Such areas would be partially self-contained with their own primary school so that young children have no main roads to cross, and with a neighbourhood centre containing a variety of shops with perhaps a hall or community centre, public house and church. A rigid standardisation of area, population or community provision is rightly to be deplored, but a certain measure of uniformity has crept in with the tendency to use the primary school as determining the basic unit for planning. In fact the whole layout and shape of the residential areas is largely governed by the siting of schools. This will be obvious when it is realised that under the 1944 Education Act a primary school requires seven acres and a secondary school seventeen acres for their buildings and playing fields. If it is agreed that the primary school should be *inside* the unit, and if it is also agreed that young children should not have more than three-quarters of a mile to walk, then it will be obvious that the size of the unit will be limited by these factors.

*Community or Chaos. N.C.S.S.

Quite different considerations condition the siting of secondary schools. With their more specialised education they must draw on a wider area; their children will come from further afield and by main roads. Hence, an obvious place for their extensive sites is in the green wedges between the neighbourhood units, or towards the perimeter of the town. Striking examples of the ways in which school siting influences the shape of a new town can be seen at Crawley where there are nine units of about 5/6,000, each enfolding its own primary school. The secondary schools are grouped together between the units, with three schools sited upon each campus which was originally to have contained also a health centre and buildings for social and recreational purposes. Successive economy cuts now leave only the schools.

Although these generous sites should provide a gracious setting for the education of the children, there are inherent difficulties in trying to focus adult community activity upon them, for the buildings, well set back within spacious grounds, may seem a little remote from the everyday life of the neighbourhood. This would not prevent the purposeful minority from finding what they want, but it may deter the uncertain majority.

Whatever its effects on community development, a plan which allows little children to reach school in safety is of the greatest social consequence. Not only would this new "design for living" do more than anything else to reduce the tragic and avoidable loss of young lives, but it would relieve mothers of anxiety and set them free from some of their escort duties.

Although all the plans so far produced for the new towns conform to the broadly accepted principles of community planning there are enough interesting variations to show the inherent flexibility of this form of planning, and the fact that it need not result in a dull uniformity and standardisation of urban pattern.

The wide divergence of view as to what size of unit is most favourable to the growth of community is reflected in the variety of the plans. Since the new towns are a new and revolutionary concept, we should expect them to break with some of the conventional housing layouts in their search for some more satisfactory design for living. The conventional street often appears to frustrate neighbourliness; hence we shall expect to find in the new towns a willingness to experiment boldly with new forms of housing layout, with groupings around garden commons, greens and play areas. Some of the problems inherent in such experiments we shall deal with later in this chapter when considering within what limits "mixed development" of differing income groups can be expected to prove

successful, and again in Chapter V in connection with recreation and the use of open space.

The Aycliffe planners, convinced that most of the units so far designed are too large to encourage the growth of community, have sub-divided each of the neighbourhood units (which they call "wards") into about six housing groups which they call "precincts" of about 100 houses. The real community group is therefore the precinct with its neighbourly grouping of houses about a common green.* The town is thus built up of these "village" groupings. Time, and the Aycliffe experiment, will help us to determine whether this predominantly rural pattern can be successfully translated into twentieth-century urban terms, but at least there is good reason to suppose that it is within groups of approximately this size that effective "neighbouring"—as typified by mutual aid between families—takes place.

The trend towards flexibility is clearly shown in the plans for Harlow. There the neighbourhood unit of 10,000 is regarded as too large either for cohesion or neighbourliness, and yet too small to support the range of facilities needed at the neighbourhood centre. A basic unit of 5,000 has therefore been chosen, large enough to support a two-stream primary school. In addition this small unit contains its own "minor" centre with a few shops, recreation space and "such community facilities as the residents may wish to build up". (A building of the "village hall" type has been suggested.) A compact unit of this kind should bring the primary school within safe walking distance of the young child and the daily shops within easy reach of the mother with the pram—two important yardsticks by which we may measure the "humanity" of our planning. These small basic units of 5,000 are then grouped in clusters of three or four around a "major" neighbourhood centre, which, serving a population of 15/20,000 can support a large group of shops, cinema, church, health centre, public houses and other community buildings. As at Aycliffe there is a recognition of the importance of the really small group, so the small basic unit of 5,000 is again broken down into "housing groups" centred around some feature of community life such as a tenants' clubroom or children's play area.

This division and sub-division of the residential areas is a timely recognition of the fact that social life does in fact consist of a series of circles of ever-increasing size, beginning with home and family, then the small group of immediate neighbours between whom practical "neighbouring" and mutual help may take place, then the wider community of the neighbourhood and finally the town itself.

*After the manner suggested by the late Sir Charles Reilly.

Such a refinement of neighbourhood planning might well answer the criticism so often made that there is no such thing as a self-contained neighbourhood since no one arbitrarily chosen area or population size can act as the catchment area for a group of social institutions which in fact draw their members from widely differing distances. Later, in Chapter V we shall have to consider the various types of community building appropriate to these varied areas and groupings.

Whatever the size and type of our neighbourhood units, there remains the problem of their relation to the town as a whole. There are those who believe that the development of comparatively self-contained neighbourhoods well equipped with their own community buildings may tend to be a dividing factor, building up local community feeling at the expense of civic unity and pride in the town as a whole. For this reason the Harlow planners stress that too long should not elapse before a start is made on the town centre. Whilst the danger of creating a group of unrelated neighbourhoods which failed to become a town cannot be ruled out, I believe that there is an even greater possibility that the equipment of the local neighbourhood centres with their necessary complement of buildings will be seriously delayed. This will have a consequence to which all too little attention has been given.

It arises from the very nature of the neighbourhood unit with its well-defined boundaries and its whole layout orientated towards a centre where the majority of its needs can be met. Now if the centre is not there, or if important items of its equipment—shops; hall, church or public house—are not provided or are long delayed, then the careful planning of the unit by which its “separateness” from other neighbourhoods is emphasised, becomes a major inconvenience. Practical proof of this is provided by the St. Paul’s Cray Estate. Here the London County Council planners have divided the estate of 15,000 into five small units each with its own “minor” centre containing sites for a few shops, a public house and a church. The central one of these units contains the “major” centre with sites for an impressive list of community buildings including a cinema, library, health centre, community centre, two churches and the principal shops. The grouping thus bears some superficial resemblance to that at Harlow. However, of all this impressive list there is nothing yet to be seen, save for a few shops in two of the outlying units, despite the fact that already there are about 12,000 residents—a total which few of the new towns are likely to reach for several years. The five small units are separated from each other by the not inconsiderable barriers of the extensive school sites and the 65 acres of woodland which have been retained in the

centre of the estate as public open space. Road access between them is thus circuitous and inconvenient and the units therefore tend to become isolated residential pockets. Building is only just commencing on the school sites and the unofficial footpaths worn across them by the residents indicate their desire to overcome the inconvenience imposed by the layout. When the school sites are fully occupied the position will be even worse unless thoughtful footpath access has been planned, the residents suffering all the inconveniences without the advantages of this type of layout. The importance of this aspect of local planning can be illustrated by the campaign which the Community Association is conducting to prevent the closure of an "unofficial" footpath across one of the school sites, leading from one of the most isolated sectors which is without shops, transport or other facilities. The intended closure of this path will add greatly to the already long walk to shops, transport, welfare clinic, library and other services in the neighbouring town of Chislehurst, and will render access to the common more difficult. Moreover it will deprive the discerning visitor who approaches the estate from this corner of a view which may come to be regarded as the finest example of landscape planning on any municipal housing estate. From this high vantage point on the rim of a wood where last year the nightingales sang all night, the eye looks down on the red and brown roofs of the houses clustering in warm and friendly harmony beneath the hanging woods of Scadbury, and across to the far line of the North Downs on the southern horizon.

As yet the "separating" influence of this type of planning, particularly when it is only half implemented, cannot be fully estimated, but already some of its effects can be observed at St. Paul's Cray. There, a tendency has been noted for the residents to feel cut off from other sectors—many admit that they have never been into any except their own or that which they traverse in their long walk to the station. It is also apparent that the shops, in the two centres where they have been provided, are rarely visited by residents from the other sectors, so effectively has the estate been planned into relatively watertight compartments. The Community Association which is attempting to cover the whole estate (only one Community Centre is planned) is already finding that the population is dispersed over so wide an area with such difficult communications that it is not easy to get committee representation from the more remote sectors. Despite every effort to avoid this happening there is still a tendency for most of the officers, committee and support to be confined to that sector which was built first and in which the association originated. This is a matter to which we

shall have to give careful attention when we come to consider the contribution which the community centre and association have to make to neighbourhood life.

The variation in the size of community groupings which we have noted in the new towns, while it is to be welcomed, does raise one unexpected difficulty. As yet we have evolved no agreed set of terms to describe and distinguish them. Thus "neighbourhood unit" may mean different things in different places and we find such additional terms as "residential area", "housing area", "section", "sector", "housing group", "ward", "precinct", and "community" all being used to denote varying types of area. Whilst not going so far as to suggest that children in the new towns may have to learn a new table "six precincts equal one ward; five wards equal one town", and so on, there does seem an urgent need to come to some agreement as to what our terms shall mean, as serious confusion is already arising. We do well to remember F. J. Osborn's view that our planning took the wrong turning in the 1920's because of the confusion and misuse of the term "garden city". In the new towns particularly, it is of vital importance that as many people as possible shall understand at least the elements of planning. It must be obvious that any public discussion of plans by either the written or spoken word will be seriously handicapped by the lack of mutually understood and accepted terms.

The possibility to which we referred just now of the town becoming a collection of unrelated neighbourhoods may be very much affected by the provision of shopping facilities. Shops contribute greatly to the "atmosphere" of a town. From time immemorial the market place has been one of the principal social centres. As we saw, Howard tried hard at Letchworth, without success, to introduce the idea of a sheltered shopping arcade as a social rendezvous. The new towns have carried out a great deal of research into the question of shopping, but our practical experience is limited to the knowledge that most old towns have too many shops and most new housing estates far too few. Neither Letchworth nor Welwyn found it easy to discover the happy medium. Nor is it easy to decide whether it is better in the early stages to provide local shops in the neighbourhood or to concentrate on a wider variety of better shops at the town centre in order to draw people to the hub of the town. It is impossible to generalise; circumstances differ in each of the towns, and their solutions will therefore display an interesting variety. Aycliffe with its genius for improvisation and for providing services in step with housing converted some old farm buildings into those two essentials, a Post Office and General Store. At Crawley where the old town already has an excellent shopping

centre serving a wide rural area, the Corporation is concentrating first on a neighbourhood shopping centre in one of the first units. In contrast, East Kilbride, where existing facilities are already inadequate, hopes to make an early start on its town centre. At St. Paul's Cray, which is typical of the London County Council satellites, the provision of shops has fallen far behind the housing programme and great inconvenience has been caused, mitigated to some extent by the efforts of the many roundsmen who call with every variety of goods. In addition the Co-operative Society maintains travelling grocery and butchers' shops. Although all these together may provide a useful supplementary service and fill a temporary gap, they are not a satisfactory substitute for shops. For the vast majority of housewives who must buy cheaply, a variety of choice and the opportunity for "window shopping" is an absolute essential; quite apart from the social value of the shopping expedition whether it is to the town centre or just round the corner. Although it is popularly believed that door-step shopping is a great boon to the housewife, it is a curious but significant fact that when the travelling grocer's shop remained stationary all day at selected points on the estate, its turnover increased considerably.

Closely related to the provision of shops is the question of transport and communications. But these latter also have an important effect on social development, which should be helped by a planned system of communications which brings neighbourhood facilities within pleasant walking distance and the town centre with its major social attractions within an easy bus ride. Much will depend of course on the speed with which the internal transport services are organised. Since some of the new towns lie within the area served by London Transport it is to be hoped that their experience will be a happier one than that of the London County Council satellites where, at St. Paul's Cray for instance, very real hardship has been caused by the rapid build-up to a population of 12,000 with neither appreciable improvement in bus services nor extension of routes to serve this vast development.

Another aspect of communications where the experience of this same estate will be a stern warning to the new-town planners is that of telephone and post office services. Only those who have lived through the pioneer days in new communities of this kind can appreciate the frustrations, inconvenience and measureless inefficiency caused by the almost total absence of even public telephone kiosks. When unremitting pressure by M.P.s, Councillors and community organisations finally resulted in the appearance of

the first kiosks, the local Scouts were just on the point of organising a service of runners for calling out in emergencies such services as Police, Fire Brigade and Ambulance.

Balanced Communities for Work and Living

This was to be the test of planning in the new towns. How are they responding to this challenge and what are the difficulties which confront them? Many considerations are involved and they are all inter-related. What factories shall go to the new towns and who are the workers who will be required to man them? What shall be the basis of selection of tenants and to what extent will "umbrellas mix with cloth caps"? These factors in their turn affect the age structure of the population with its profound influence on everything from nursery school provision to housing accommodation for the old.

Primarily, the balance of the town is determined by the nature, variety and siting of its industry. A look at this aspect of the new towns gives much cause for hope and satisfaction, but there is at the same time some cause for grave concern. Harlow is developing industrial sites on both sides of the town to avoid the "east end" and "west end" which developed at Welwyn. Crawley reports a satisfactory proportion of skilled workers among the first firms to open factories there. The figures are as follow:

	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
Managerial	44	3	47
Clerical	71	64	135
Technical and skilled	593	35	628
Semi-skilled and unskilled ...	352	175	527
Total ...	1,060	277	1,337

Hemel Hempstead on the other hand is faced with very great difficulties because it has one or two factory groups employing large numbers of semi-skilled workers and an overwhelming preponderance of female labour. Basildon points to the problem in its 1950 Report: "It will be necessary to control the tenancies to provide for a balanced inflow in the correct proportion of workers in the building trade and other industries and services". If the new towns are to build up balanced communities for work and living it would seem that they must be able to control the choice of industry and population which shall come to them. In fact they can control neither. The Board of Trade decides which industries can move, the industrialist brings his key workers and those others who wish to come.

The residue are recruited through the labour exchanges in the "exporting areas", and the Corporation then offers them accommodation.* Thus it has no voice in determining those who come. It needs to know something about the composition of the families. A young married population with young families needs extra primary schools, and this "bulge" will in course of time work its way right through primary and secondary schools, youth service and county colleges. The Harlow Report for 1950 emphasises this basic problem of attracting a variety of suitable industries which underlies many of the difficulties of the new towns. It states: "... the Corporation is seriously concerned at the possibility of houses being available in considerable numbers without the necessary factories being there to provide work locally. A number of industrialists, suitable for introduction to the new town, are prepared to build or lease premises, but so far, with one exception, it has not been possible to obtain the promise of a building licence. . . . This is now the greatest problem unsolved. A solution is outside the powers of the Corporation. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of finding one". Here is a situation calling for some straight thinking. It is manifestly absurd for Parliament to charge the New Towns' Corporations with the task of building balanced towns while a Government department proceeds to render this impossible.

The question of the selection of tenants bristles with difficulties. The Corporations begin with the great difficulty of reconciling two different sets of priorities. The first is to satisfy the needs of industry by housing first the key workers then the others required to man the new factories. But the ordinary housing priorities cannot be overlooked and most of the local authorities in whose areas new towns are being built already have long waiting lists of their own. Those who are on this list and whose names are passed over in favour of key workers moving in from London can hardly help being embittered opponents of the new town idea. Thus the seeds of civic division are sown and the Corporation's reputation for even-handed justice is gone; not only must justice be done;—it must appear to be done. Moreover the solution of allowing the local authority to develop its own estates within the new town brings a further complication for then the division between old residents and incomers would be physically and

*The Ministry of Labour's insistence on normal recruitment through the London Labour Exchanges has serious and obviously unforeseen implications which threaten to defeat the whole policy of dispersal of industry and people. This advertising of jobs through the Labour Exchanges is bound to encourage workers from all over the country to drift to London for by so doing they can obtain both a job and a home in the new towns, thus bypassing the homeless thousands on the London waiting lists.

psychologically accentuated. A refinement of this problem occurs at Welwyn where the Development Corporation, in an endeavour to redress the balance between east and west sides of the town, is building on the east side a number of blocks of flats with what are described as middle-class rentals. This aim of the Corporation to adjust the social balance is entirely worthy, and the selection of tenants is made accordingly. This may, in the words of the chairman of the Corporation, "explain some apparent injustices in length of applications, conditions of hardship, and so on". But such action is likely to lead to considerable friction and misunderstanding.

Yet another factor militating against a balanced population in which all income groups are proportionately represented is the fact that rents are bound to be high if the towns are to pay their way. This has the effect of excluding the lowest income groups. These include some of the large families living in the central city areas, often in blocks of tenement flats, who urgently need a house with a garden but cannot afford to move away from the old areas near to their work where living costs (aided by rent subsidies of £48 per annum) are lowest. In one of the new towns it is popularly believed by many people on the waiting list that no one with an income of less than £10 per week would be able to afford a house. If this were true it is obvious that a balanced population could not be achieved, and many families most urgently needing it would be denied the healthy environment of the new towns.*

The difficulties which confront the Corporations are certainly formidable. But a comparison between the situation at St. Paul's Cray and the new town of Hemel Hempstead is enough to indicate the progress which is being made. In the former, owing to the lack of liaison between housing and education authorities, it seems that few, if any, of the 200 teachers who will be needed for the new schools there will be able to obtain houses in the community which they serve—a continuation of the unfortunate policy of segregation which impoverished so many inter-war municipal estates. This is just one of the consequences of the failure to keep housing and other public services in step. Houses are there; schools are not. But houses cannot be kept waiting empty. So, for many years to come, those teachers will be unable to live within the community. At Hemel Hempstead, where the school programme is in advance of housing, accommodation has been allocated for building workers, police, district nurses, and school teachers, as well as others who will be coming to work in the new town as a direct result of its growth.

*Harlow is, in fact, building various types of house for the lower income groups, some for the tenant earning £5-£6 a week, some at a slightly higher rent for the £7-£8 a week tenant, and a third type for those earning say £10 per week.

In their endeavour to provide suitable houses for people of differing income levels, the Corporation can only make an inspired guess as to the wage and income structure of the prospective population. As an example Harlow proposes to build 80* per cent of its houses for lower income groups. Of the remaining 20 per cent, 10 per cent are houses costing £2,000 to build; 7 per cent £2,500; 2 per cent £3,000, and the remaining 1 per cent £3,500. By leaving some sites for later development any necessary adjustments can be made in these proportions. It seems clear, however, that the present limitations on the building of more expensive houses will mean that business leaders, directors and executives and the more highly paid professional men will tend to live outside the town. The New Towns Committee, under Lord Reith, referred in its Final Report to the part which professional men and women, writers, artists and others, retired people from all walks of life and those of independent means, might play in building up the social, political, artistic and recreational activities of the town; there seems little hope at present that any of these will be able to make their homes in the new towns. The Report went on to stress that "the character of the town as one of diverse and balanced social composition must be established at the beginning" or "it will be difficult to redress the balance later". Once established it will be relatively easy to maintain.

Few would dispute the necessity for social balance in the town as a whole; many are doubtful of the wisdom of trying to achieve it by means of "mixed development" within each neighbourhood. This is a highly controversial matter about which there has been much speculation, but of which we have as yet little real experience as most mixed development schemes are still in their earliest stages. It is, however, clear that the relatively self-contained neighbourhood unit with its well-defined boundaries could become a most efficient instrument for social segregation. American critics of neighbourhood planning have pointed out its potentialities for separating incompatible racial and class groups, and that it is being actively advocated by real estate developers who through zoning and restrictive covenants have sought to keep up property standards by the exclusion of negro and other "inharmonious" groups. In this country, however, the ideal of the mixed community has not been abandoned, although the first attempts at its creation have resulted in a deeper appreciation of the immense forces making for social segregation. It is possible to recognise several main schools of thought which have emerged. First there is the policy of planning homogeneous or one-class neighbourhoods as in the U.S., using all

*At present this proportion is 90 per cent but it is anticipated that a reversion to the original formula will be made later.

the techniques of modern physical planning to reinforce the natural urge towards class or racial segregation. We should hardly expect to find any examples of conscious attempts at such segregation in the new towns; but in the first plan for Hemel Hempstead some of the units were to contain *mainly* subsidised houses, others *mainly* non-subsidised, whilst a third category would contain a mixture of both. Here was a tacit assumption of the need for separation. It is significant that this idea has been abandoned in the later plan. The pioneer development of Welwyn Garden City was also broadly on these lines. The third school of thought advocates the judicious mixing of houses for the different groups within the same neighbourhood, but in small homogeneous groups arranged in such ways that incompatibilities are reduced to the minimum. St. Paul's Cray, where my knowledge arises from actual residence, is a good example of this type of mixed development. Small pockets of private housing from the inter-war years exist on the estate and the bigger non-subsidy houses have been mainly grouped in these areas. This development has been adversely criticised. "Cloth caps and rolled umbrellas" do not mix, it is said. This is undoubtedly true; but it may be an entirely superficial judgment for there is neither the place nor the opportunity for them ever to mix or to get to know each other. With pubs, clubs, churches and community centre all relegated to an uncertain future, with any form of social institution, in which they might play or work together, still lacking, social contact is limited to the casual greeting in the street or a chance conversation in an overcrowded suburban train. In such circumstances it is hardly surprising that both community association and church, each working from hopelessly inadequate and precariously held temporary premises in the workmen's canteen huts, record little progress in bridging the great gulf. Here again the lesson for the new town planners is that neighbourhood planning must be reasonably complete if it is to be at all effective. Unless at an early stage some social institutions are available, the whole policy of mixed development is likely to be endangered or written off as a failure: clearly it is absurd to create situations of potential conflict and tension without providing the institutions by which they can be resolved.

Aycliffe, with its bold experiment of grouping houses of diverse types and income standards around common greens after the old village pattern, represents the fourth school of thought. Here the planners are relying upon the layout with its neighbourly grouping of houses round the "village green" to help to create a cohesive community group within which "neighbouring", as symbolised by mutual aid, is likely to take place. But "shouting distance", which

some sociologists believe defines the area over which mutual aid customarily takes place, may have other connotations—it might with advantage also determine the minimum distance between a children's play area and the nearest houses! Here is the dilemma for the Aycliffe planners—for one of the purposes of their "village green" with its freedom and safety from through traffic is to provide safe play for little children within sight of their mothers. Another criticism of the Aycliffe plan is that it is an artificial attempt to build up an urban community upon a rural pattern. It is pointed out that the countryman's contacts are confined in large measure to people sharing his own economic and educational standards, his traditional outlook, beliefs and way of life. The critics claim that this cannot be so within the highly differentiated and heterogeneous urban society. It is too early for any final judgments but the Corporation can point to their village greens around which building labourers, drivers, chemists, clerks and officials of the Development Corporation all live in apparent harmony, and can claim that the experiment is working out well. It is significant that there have been few complaints about the unfenced and open forecourts—a remarkable achievement in an experimental layout of this kind. Other planners, who feel that Aycliffe requires too great faith in human nature, have in some cases borrowed its emphasis on the importance of the small groups but have made them heterogeneous, building up a balanced neighbourhood unit by a careful disposition of a number of these groups in locations favourable to their own particular characteristics. It seems not unlikely that we shall see an increasing trend towards this type of neighbourhood planning. It is broadly in line with another school of thought which advocates using modern transport and planned communications to encourage free movement between small homogeneous neighbourhoods. "The gains to be secured," writes Gordon Campleman in a recent article in *Town & Country Planning*,* "from lessening class differences will be better secured by planning designed to accentuate the interdependence of neighbourhoods, and their mutual interests and responsibilities in town affairs. It is on this less personal plane that there is the most fruitful ground for co-operation between different classes."

It will be readily appreciated that in any of the mixed development patterns we have been considering, good housing management can, by skilful selection and placing of tenants, obviate some of the more serious sources of friction and incompatibility such as the placing of "problem families" alongside elderly people without

* Aug. 1950.

children. At the same time we should not rely on housing management to cover up the inherent defects of a bad layout.

The fact that house ownership will ultimately be possible in the new towns, and that in one at least rent rebates are to be given to those who do their own interior decorating, should remove some of the factors which have hitherto encouraged a dislike of municipal housing among people who have not previously been eligible for it.

The absence of a local labour force adequate for building the first stage of a new town raises one particular problem of social and industrial balance. At Stevenage, for instance, nearly all the building labour has to come from a long distance, involving travelling and subsistence allowances. This inflates building costs which in turn necessitate high rents. To avoid this, there are three courses open. The builders may be accommodated in hutments, hostels or houses. Huts are unsightly and uncomfortable; hostels are uneconomic; houses are best, but if too many are allocated to builders, "New Town" becomes "Builders' Town", an industrial enclave is created, and the factory programme is delayed because key workers cannot be housed fast enough. Stevenage is solving this difficult problem in an ingenious way by adding canteen facilities to some of the first blocks of terrace houses to form hostel units. Later these will be converted back to normal residential purposes.

We have already noted the need to provide houses for the different income groups. In addition, a wide variety of accommodation, ranging from bachelor flats and old people's accommodation to family houses with four and five bedrooms, must be provided in the proportions in which they are likely to be needed. If stable and contented communities are to develop, people must be willing to put down roots. This they will not do when they are housed in unsuitable accommodation. The family rehoused in a flat but yearning for a house with a garden will regard the flat as a second best and will be forever restless and discontented waiting its turn to move. So the Corporation have gone to great lengths to estimate their requirements in terms of differing house types. This is of great importance in a new town in a housing shortage when neither overcrowding nor under-use can be tolerated. But again, little more than an inspired guess can be made so far as the first neighbourhoods are concerned; the new towns cannot choose their tenants so as to build up a balanced population, and cannot be certain therefore of the age structure of the population or the composition of families. Nor can they forecast with any certainty the population trends which will determine the size of families in the next half-century—and houses must be built to last longer than that. However, they have done their best to make accurate forecasts. Hemel

Hempstead is fairly typical of the English new towns with the following proportions: Flats 18 per cent of the total: of the houses costing under £2,100 40 per cent 1 and 2 bedrooms; 50 per cent 3 bedrooms (10 per cent of which are convertible to 4 bedrooms); 10 per cent 4 bedrooms. In many post-war housing schemes there has been a tendency for the 3-bedroom type to dominate the programme unduly. Crawley, assuming that not more than 15 per cent of those coming from London to a town in the country would wish for flats, may have to disappoint some of them, for the Minister has asked the Corporation to consider stepping up the ultimate population from 50,000 to 60,000. This can only be done either by building in the agricultural belt or by increasing the proportion of flats. Both these policies would appear to be regrettable contradictions of the original new towns policy. But if a few of these emigrants from London are forced to accept flats against their real wish, what of the frustrations and disappointments of the multitudes for whom there is no escape from the capital where 75 per cent of redevelopment is to be in flats. Since one of the great aims of the new towns is to reduce this kind of frustration to the irreducible minimum, it does seem a regrettable lapse when, for the first time, we have the opportunity to design a really human framework for living, we should begin by perpetuating the very errors we are seeking to remove. Nevertheless it must be admitted that although the demand from the early settlers is so predominantly in favour of houses, they are not truly representative of the national population. In fact a recent survey by the Ministry revealed an unexpectedly high proportion of small families whose needs could be met by the provision of flats. It would be wasteful if the Corporation were to build solely to meet present demands at the expense of the ultimate needs of the towns.

Public Relations

One of the most important factors affecting the social atmosphere of the town is the establishment of good relationships between the old and the new residents. If one harmonious community is to be built up considerable imagination and intelligence will be required to avoid the inevitable points of friction, and it will be necessary to utilise all the resources of local government, the press, and voluntary organisations. A useful starting point is the realisation that the first citizens of the new towns are the old residents of the existing town. We are bound to ask ourselves why it is that public relationships in one town are better than in another but no easy answer can be given when so many complex factors are involved. There is already much evidence to suggest that this problem of relationship increases in proportion to the size of the existing

nucleus. Hemel Hempstead with its 23,000, for instance, has experienced more difficulties than Harlow with its 4,000, thus vindicating the judgment of the Reith Committee which recommended the building of new towns on relatively undeveloped sites on the grounds that "the interference with existing interests and relationships have not been fully appreciated".

For the new residents much will depend on the warmth of their welcome. Most of the Corporations have gone to infinite trouble to make the settling-in process as easy as possible. The examples quoted below can only give an indication of some of the imaginative schemes which have been adopted. At Crawley the local football club challenged the first firm who were coming to Crawley to a match and afterwards entertained about 300 of the employees and their families for the afternoon and evening. The Crawley Corporation interview their new residents in London to ascertain not only their needs and preferences for housing accommodation but also their leisure time interests, and to introduce them to groups and societies in Crawley in which they are likely to be interested. Both Crawley and Hemel Hempstead give their tenants a comprehensive list of public services and voluntary organisations, the latter town making a regular feature of entertaining the employees of firms emigrating there, showing them over houses, factory sites and schools.

Nor are these the only ways in which the Corporations have sought to establish good relations with the residents new and old, with the local authorities and with the wider public. A selection at random from their own reports will indicate the varied ways in which they are seeking to solve this problem. Hemel Hempstead has established a Joint Consultative Committee of Town Council and Development Corporation; Harlow has bi-monthly meetings with the Joint Parishes New Towns Committee; whilst Crawley Corporation invites the elected representatives of all the authorities in the area to meet them annually. Stevenage Corporation has maintained an Information Office in the High Street where many enquiries have been answered. Such an office is of particular value where, as is often the case, the Corporation's main offices are remotely situated in a country mansion some miles from the town centre. Stevenage too is to be commended on the excellence of its illustrated booklet describing the new town and the activities of the Corporation.*

The provision of information is of vital importance in a new town where many thousands of people are settling into new homes,

**The New Town of Stevenage*. Stevenage Development Corporation. 1949. 2s. 6d.

new jobs and a new life. Who should provide this information? At first sight the Development Corporation would appear the obvious choice. But there is a strong case for suggesting that information services should be provided largely by some independent agency such as a Citizens' Advice Bureau. The Corporations have such immense influence over the whole life of the community that there are obvious dangers of "paternalism" if too many services are centralised there. The Citizen's Advice Bureau as a local self-governing unit with its controlling committee drawn from both statutory and voluntary sources (including the Development Corporation) could maintain an independent status free from any suggestion of bias or patronage, with the right to advise the citizen in his or her best interest and with the freedom to raise any issue with the appropriate statutory or voluntary agency, or if necessary, through the proper machinery, with a central Government Department or in Parliament itself.

In a new town so many questions will directly affect the Corporation that they will be bound to provide an Information Service. It may be, therefore, that the best solution will lie in some joint use of premises, making for the closest liaison of staff, as well as effecting important economies for both the Corporation and the Bureau.

It was perhaps inevitable that Community Associations with their concern for building up neighbourhood life and their links with a wide variety of local organisations would be regarded as having a special part to play in welcoming the incoming residents and building a bridge of friendship between the old town and the new. The corporations have therefore encouraged, and in some cases promoted, the formation of such associations. At Aycliffe, membership was automatic for every incoming resident and when only a few hundred houses were occupied the outbuildings of a farm were converted into a small temporary community centre for their use.

In some cases the new towns have tried to establish friendly links with the "exporting" areas, but these efforts have been limited by the uncertainties as to the areas from which people would ultimately be drawn. Crawley, confident that the new residents will move into a friendly atmosphere, pays warm tribute to the constructive attitude of local authorities, local bodies and the general public.

A major factor in all public relations is the Press. The Reith Committee recommended that there should be a weekly newspaper, either existing or new, which would report fully on the life of the developing town and provide a forum for discussion and criticism of policy, plans and problems. It was thought that a newspaper already existing might be prepared to act in this way, or alterna-

tively one of them might be prepared to start a paper specially for the new town, the Corporation assisting if necessary with capital, but "not so much as would enable it to exercise control". It will be a long time before any of the new towns can support its own weekly newspaper.* They have therefore relied on existing papers covering a wider area, supplementing them perhaps with a simple news-sheet circulating among the new residents.

A great deal will depend on the objectivity and fair-mindedness of the local Press. It is to be regretted that sometimes this has been lacking, and some of the new towns have been subjected to a constant barrage of ill-founded criticism. Constructive criticism is greatly to be welcomed, but purely destructive criticism can poison the delicate relations which it is so important to build up. Where some form of supplementary news-sheet is deemed necessary, to whom is its production best entrusted? If it is left to the Corporation the essential element of self-criticism may be lost. On the other hand a local body such as a community association may lack either the financial stability or editorial resources. The mortality rate among local journals of this kind is distressingly high. At Aycliffe where relations between Corporation, Community Association and Church are extremely close and cordial, the news-sheet is edited and published by the local Vicar who was one of the first residents. It is distributed free of charge by the Corporation to all residents who, as we have already noted, are, at present, automatically members of the Community Association. Where the local community association seems strong and balanced enough to undertake a task of this kind, I would suggest from my own experience at St. Paul's Cray that there are great advantages to be gained from encouraging it to run the local journal, aided perhaps by a temporary subsidy from the Corporation. At St. Paul's Cray the Community Association runs a monthly journal with a circulation already about 2,000, i.e. to more than 50 per cent of the homes on the estate, despite its relatively high price. Advertising revenue in a new community should be considerable—in this case it is sufficient to enable the magazine to contribute to the Community Centre Building Fund. Its success was founded on the fact that its first issue was in the form of a directory and map of the estate and its environs, sold to every incoming resident. Any organisation which is able to perform so essential a service to the newcomers lost in the green fields or the confusion of building operations and nameless roads is likely to establish itself as an essential element in the life of the community. The importance of such a journal is particularly great in

*Except Hemel Hempstead and Welwyn, which already have their own.

the early days for ventilating public matters in the awkward time before buildings suitable for meetings on any scale are available.

"For The People—By The People"

There is little opportunity here to discuss in detail the large and complex issues of planning and the general public.*

One of the most intractable problems of a democracy committed to long range planning is how to reconcile individual liberty and immediate local interests with the necessities of the wider community. There is a wide measure of agreement that this cannot be done by imposing a pattern from above—that not only should planning be "for the people", it should be "by the people" also. But we are by no means certain how this can be achieved. As the Report of the Schuster Committee† reminds us: "The control which the planning authorities can exercise over physical environment is, so far as control is physically practicable, very nearly absolute". This is a fact of our time the implications of which are but dimly realised, because as yet the whole process of planning seems to be remote from the ordinary citizen. Its benefits are removed to a distant and unforeseeable future, whilst its restrictions seem immediate, apparent and petty, as when the citizen's private plan conflicts with the wider public plan. In such circumstances he feels himself the helpless victim of a remote system which he can neither comprehend nor influence—certainly he is neither the master of his fate nor the shaper of his own destiny. This feeling is intensified by the fact that in the interests of overall technical efficiency, planning areas and authorities must be large and few and therefore remote. It is true that planning is a highly technical affair, a job for experts to reconcile almost incompatible claims when housing, farming, schools, playing fields and aerodromes are all competing for the same inadequate acres. But bureaucratic control is very near when the ordinary man sits back in apathy and indifference and leaves all planning to the experts. In the new towns where a new, exciting and revolutionary framework for living has to be designed "from the ground up" this has profound implications. In most of them, where the planners start with a relatively clean sheet, the advantages of designing the town as a whole as a place for a full and satisfying life are already beginning to appear, and planning has therefore become a live local issue, immediate yet continuing, and, despite the mystery of words in which it is sometimes obscured, almost under-

*For a thoughtful and penetrating analysis of this problem see P.E.P. Vol. XVII, No. 316, August 1950.

†Report of the Committee on the Qualifications of Planners. H.M.S.O. 2s. 6d.

standable. Vague abstractions are slowly materialising in bricks and mortar and as the process gathers momentum so will public interest and understanding lead to more active participation. But here, paradoxically, we meet the main difficulty. The people for whom the plans are made are not there to be consulted—at least not at first—nor is there any obvious way in which they can be brought into consultation.* But the difficulty is not quite so serious as appears at first sight for reasons which will become clearer as we consider what are the various stages of planning. These can be outlined briefly. First there is the collection and assembly of facts, by research, surveys and discussion with all the many appropriate authorities, then the drawing up of a master plan as a guide to development, with its various subsidiary plans for houses and shops, schools, roads, industry and recreation. Before the plans are adopted there is public discussion and criticism of them. The detailed plans for each major project will in turn be discussed and perhaps amended before the next stage in which they come to be implemented. Finally, and this is a point to which we must return presently, there will be the need for periodic revision as the plans mature and develop. At what stage in this continuing process can public interest be stimulated to the point of active participation and through what institutions can this interest be expressed?

In the new towns it is obvious that we must distinguish between the part the original and the new residents can play, for the latter cannot begin to have any influence until they have arrived and have begun to become integrated into the growing community. There is no lack of interest on the part of the original inhabitants, but they are bound to regard the plan somewhat critically from the standpoint of their own private and sectional interests which often stand to be seriously disturbed. Their interest would be deeper and more understanding if they had assisted in any way in the preliminary surveys which have been conducted. As yet we have scarcely begun to explore the possibilities of this field of citizen participation, but the important social survey carried out by a group of ordinary housewives, with some technical help and preparation beforehand, which prepared the way for the Peterlee new town, is an indication of what can be done.†

Limited surveys by schools, youth groups and various specialist groups have also been useful in adding to our knowledge of local habits, conditions and needs. We are still hampered by our lack of

*One limited but important way is discussed later in this chapter (see p. 64-5).

†See *New Town for Old*. The Peterlee Social Survey. Helen Rankin, Bureau of Current Affairs. Pamphlet No. 75. March 1949.

experience in this field and even the absence of helpful literature on the subject.*

Of greater value than the occasional large-scale public meeting is the quiet and continuing work of education through the many special interest groups which are affected in one way or another by the impact of a new town. To mention only a few typical ones, women's groups are vitally interested in shopping facilities and the planning of neighbourhood centres, Parent/Teacher Associations are concerned with the siting of schools, youth groups with facilities for recreation, and trade unions with the development of factories.

Of course it may be argued that planning will remain democratic and sensitive to local opinion so long as the appropriate committees of the democratically elected representatives of the people, the local authorities, scrutinise, amend and reject or approve the plans. Now this may be perfectly true so far as major issues are concerned, but it is less certain as we come down to the lower levels of planning, where it seems quite clear that there are serious gaps and deficiencies in the system. It is doubtful, for instance, whether the opinions of women councillors and committee members are adequately representative of the special interests of women in many aspects of planning.†

As another small practical example from my own experience, it is difficult to imagine that any woman's experience influenced the height of the individual steps which give access to many of the houses and areas of the delightfully hilly and interesting site at St. Paul's Cray. In some places it is best to lift prams up and down these flights of steps!

It is in these small details of local planning—the range of shopping facilities, access to schools, frequency of transport, location of children's playing space, the myriad little items which go to make up the convenience and pleasantness, or otherwise, of local life, that the ordinary citizen comes into his own. Both the planning experts and the elected representatives are here at a disadvantage, for in this sort of minor neighbourhood planning, those who live there really do know best, and it is here in the neighbourhood that they can play their part most effectively. Even the best schemes seem to need adjustment and revision when they are subjected to the supreme test of being lived in, and our machinery must be adapted

**The School Looks Around*. Layton & Blanco White. Longmans. Is useful for school surveys.

†Kilmarnock, a Scottish Burgh of over 40,000 in 1944 had not one woman member on the Town Council. Two women representing the Kilmarnock Child Welfare Ladies Work Party served on the sub-committee for Maternity and Child Welfare of the Public Health Committee. Evidence from an unpublished social survey by the Scottish Council of Social Service.

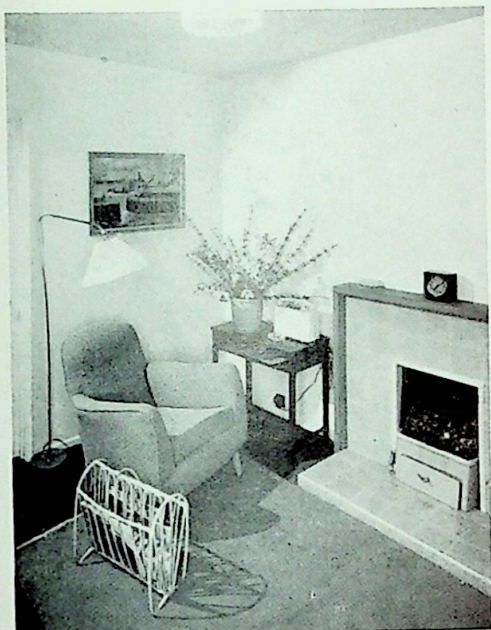
for this kind of revision. Happily there is at our disposal in the community association, machinery suitable for this purpose and many associations can point to useful achievements in this field.*

Because the Community Association meets so many needs there is an understandable tendency to overrate its potentialities, but here at least it does seem to offer a unique combination of advantages. It functions on a neighbourhood basis and it is (or should be) widely representative of local interests, voluntary organisations and statutory services as well as individuals. Concern for the welfare of the neighbourhood as a whole rather than for sectional interests, and its work for the development of a spirit of fellowship and community should commend the Community Association in this field of activity. Planning in the neighbourhood is "grass roots" planning; it is on the human scale affecting everyday living in a way which ordinary people can understand. Here then, perhaps, almost on their own doorstep they can make their most effective contribution.

It should not be thought that a Community Association is the only body capable of such action. A Council of Social Service operating over a somewhat wider area such as a small town could deal with rather wider issues of planning. An excellent example is afforded by the footpath survey carried out by the only Council of Social Service in a new town, that at Hemel Hempstead. School and Scout groups co-operated and every footpath in the designated area was walked. Footpath access in towns is a revolutionary concept in modern town planning, and is of great importance in the new towns. Here again none are so well qualified to judge as those who do the actual walking!

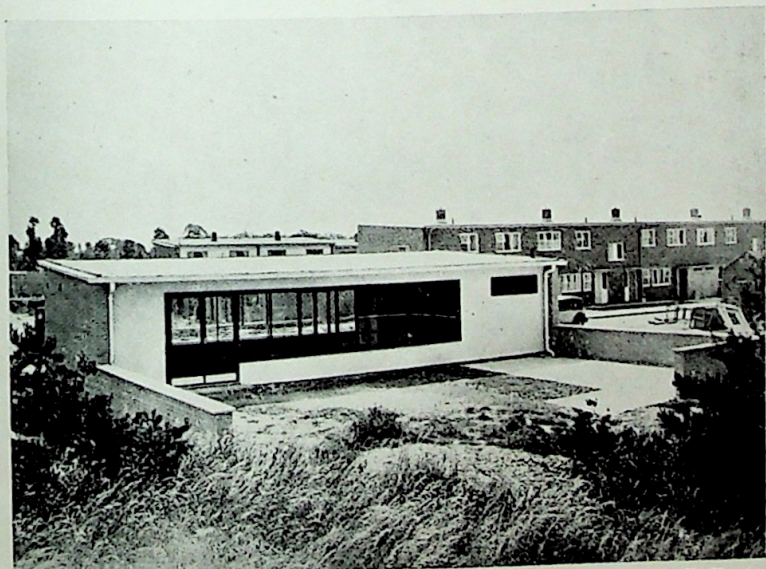
A most interesting development is the emergence of new and experimental machinery for local consultation and for ascertaining certain needs. Aycliffe has constituted an Advisory Committee of representatives of the local Co-operative Society, the National Chamber of Trade and officers of the Corporation to advise on all matters concerned with shopping facilities, whilst a number of the new towns have set up the statutory Local Advisory Committees to advise on the working of the Licensing Act, 1949. Hemel Hempstead in addition to its Joint Consultative Committee of Town Council and Development Corporation has established an Industrial Advisory Committee representing existing industries to advise the Corporation on its industrial programme and the need of local industry for increased labour. But most interesting of all is its Women's Advisory Committee on Housing comprising one representative from each of the "exporting" boroughs or Urban Districts with which Hemel Hempstead is linked, together with two repre-

*For the story of one such, see the author's *Tenement Town*. Jason Press.



Winter mud in a new town makes it difficult for housewives to throw open a beautiful lounge, like this at Hatfield, for committees and meetings.

By courtesy of the Council of Industrial Design

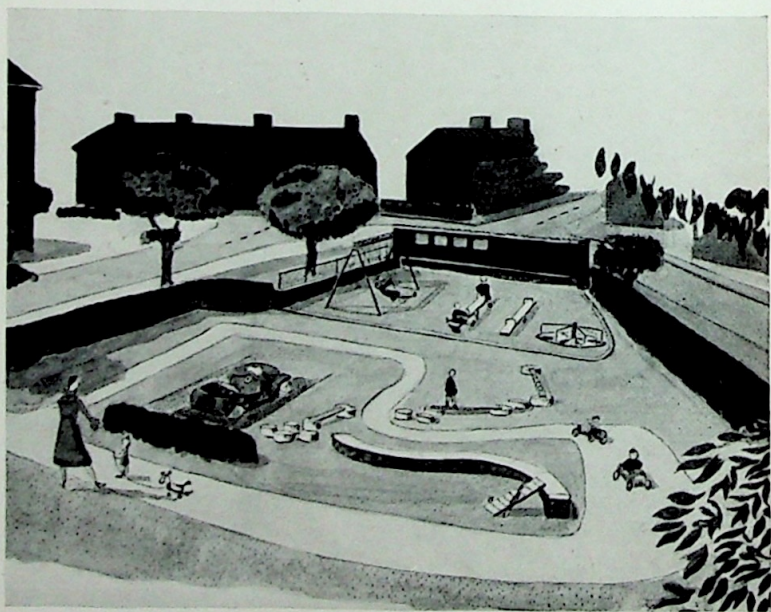


F. Harris

Harlow hopes to solve the problem by the use of Tenants' Common Rooms for parties, meetings, etc.



Fine landscaping at St. Paul's Cray—but largely at the expense of children's playing space.



Grenfell Baines Group

Some of the new towns have designed play corners for small children like this one at Aycliffe.

sentatives from the old town of Hemel Hempstead and one from the first neighbourhood in the new town, with provision for others to be added from each of the new neighbourhoods as they develop. This arrangement would appear to go some way to overcoming the difficulty that the people for whom the plans are made are not there to be consulted (to which reference is made on p. 62). It will be obvious, however, that this machinery for consultation will only be workable if reasonably strong links exist between the new towns and the "exporting" areas to which they were originally to be related and, as we shall see later, these links are already proving somewhat tenuous. In all new housing areas women have to bear the heaviest burdens arising from the difficult pioneer conditions; and their organisations, as "pressure groups", may be able to do much towards the improvement of living conditions. It is possible that this influence could be even more effective where they are linked together by a Standing Conference of Women's Organisations, some 78 of which already exist mainly in the bigger towns "to bring the experience of their constituent organisations to bear on questions of public welfare".*

The problems of administration, control and local government in the new towns are quite unprecedented, and many of the delays and frustrations arising therefrom are perhaps inevitable. Here we can only touch on those aspects which most directly influence social development, leaving aside such major issues as the reform of local government generally and the extent to which Ministries and government departments should exercise control over statutory bodies such as the Development Corporations, a matter over which as yet there is no general agreement. Crawley, where the problem is most acute because it falls within the area of three county councils, three rural district councils and five parish councils, referred in its 1948/9 Report to the inordinate number of "consultations and approvals required for the execution of plans" and the "authorities whose plans and projects have to be co-ordinated with those of the Corporation". Harlow in its 1950 Report referred to the machinery which has been created as "cumbersome almost past belief and which produces in profusion officials doing one after another work that one official could well have been entrusted to do by himself. Development Corporations have too many masters".

The new towns such as Crawley with the worst problems of administrative division had hopes that the Local Government Boundary Commission would resolve some of their worst difficulties. The Commission had recommended that Crawley should fall wholly

*For further details of their work see *Our Towns Are Our Opportunities*. N.C.S.S. 1948.

within West Sussex and that an Urban District Council should be established at an early date to administer it. But the work of the Commission has been suspended and the counties with problems of this nature will now have to promote private Parliamentary Bills. This is a matter of very great urgency affecting almost every aspect of development in the new towns. Unless both boundaries and procedure can be greatly simplified the whole difficult and delicate operation of keeping the essential public services in step with the housing programme and the build-up of population will be endangered. This is one of the lessons brought home by the experience of the London County Council out-county estates, where even in the large post-war schemes all the essential community services, shops, transport, schools, recreation and churches have fallen hopelessly behind the build-up of population. For this disappointing failure to avoid the admitted errors of earlier housing estates a great deal of blame attaches to the system which fails to provide adequate liaison between the London County Council and the receiving authorities and emphasises yet again the weakness of this type of fringe development. Another grave disadvantage of this "tangled thicket of controls" and authorities is that it effectively defeats any attempt to bring ordinary people into planning in the manner suggested earlier in this chapter. Unless we are prepared to act with energy and imagination this great opportunity in the new towns to find a more active and democratic basis for local planning will be thrown away and planning will be discredited because of the bureaucratic nightmare to which it has unnecessarily led.

LEISURE, RECREATION AND SOCIAL LIFE

Increased leisure — the pioneering phase — need for improvised premises—the voluntary spirit in action, and frustrated—community associations: opportunities and dangers—no automatic provision of community centres—possible alternatives—new patterns of development: the Harlow experiment—youth service: children's organisations, needs of adolescence, problem of premises again—old people's welfare—open-air recreation: the varied needs of children, experimental playgrounds—the green "wedges", spectacular sports, allotments—churches as community builders: problems of development, some revolutionary experiments—commercial and provided entertainment, cinemas, drama, cultural provision.

AS working hours grew shorter leisure should have increased; but in the big cities much of it was consumed in queuing and strap-hanging during the journey to work. In the new towns where work and homes will be within a short distance of each other the workers will get a daily "bonus" of leisure time amounting in some cases to nearly two hours. This has important and obvious repercussions on every form of leisure-time interest. Men will have more time to spend in their homes and with their families, and they will have more time and opportunity to build up their own organisations for recreation as well as availing themselves of commercial and provided entertainment. "A self-contained and balanced community for work and living" implies the opportunity for a wide variety of recreation for all classes and all ages, within the town and its environs. Sport for the adventurous young, pleasures of the mind for the cultured, quiet enjoyment for age; the freedom of the countryside for all. The new towns provide a challenging opportunity to meet the wide ranging needs in that important sector of life where men are free to choose what they will do. In football stadium, dog track and super cinema the big cities "lay on" passive entertainment on a mass scale but offer proportionately few opportunities for active participation or creative leisure. In complete contrast, the new housing estates offer a man the great blessings of a house, a garden and probably a tool shed but few opportunities beyond the little horizon of his home. In dormitory suburb and housing estate social life was frustrated because the whole apparatus of community life was missing. For women the position was even worse. Their new

labour-saving homes gave them more leisure but there was nowhere to spend it and they were still tied to their homes by the demands of young children. It was not surprising that the social diseases of loneliness, boredom and frustration flourished. Even the first garden cities were unable to satisfy the demands for recreation which grew with every new opportunity which was presented.

The new towns will have to go through a pioneering phase when all the emphasis will be on the simpler pleasures which the early residents can create for themselves, supplemented by the existing resources of the old town. Most of the small towns which were designated as new towns had a variety of social institutions but a serious lack of premises in which to house them, even before any newcomers arrived, and their resources are therefore stretched to the utmost limits. Two instances chosen at random will suffice to illustrate the problem. Old Harlow has a variety of youth organisations including Scouts, Guides, Brigades, Youth Club, Young Farmers' Club and Church Clubs; adult organisations include Drama Group, Choir, W.E.A. Natural History and Camera Clubs, Horticultural Society, British Legion, British Red Cross, St. John Ambulance Brigade, W.V.S., Toc H., Men's Institute, Women's Institute, Mothers' Union, Old People's Club; in addition there are branches of the political parties. Outdoor clubs include football, cricket, tennis, bowls, hockey and swimming. The only premises available for them are the Village Hall and Small Hall, some rooms in the school, the Women's Institute Hall and Committee room, Men's Institute gym. and committee room. Twenty-two organisations are affiliated to the Community Association, but there is no community centre.

East Kilbride, with about 7,000 people, has rather more accommodation but even more organisations. They include Brigades, Guides, Y.M.C.A., Girls' Guild, Youth Club; Tenants', Ratepayers' and Civic Associations, Political Parties, Choir, Adult School, Camera Club, Historical Society, Beekeepers', Poultry and Pig Clubs, British Legion, W.V.S., British Red Cross Society, Townswomen's Guild, Old People's Club, Freemasons, Badminton, Darts and Billiards Clubs. There are a number of women's groups attached to the churches. Outdoor organisations include football, bowls and golf clubs, two football supporters' clubs and one speedway supporters' club. The only premises are the Village Hall and youth centre, church hall, school hall, Masonic rooms and the Y.M.C.A.

The inevitable emphasis in the new towns on simple and home-made pleasures rather than sophisticated ones may not be a bad thing in so far as it helps to redress one of the unhealthiest tendencies of our time. But even simple pleasures require buildings

of some kind at the beginning—a fact which has again been overlooked even on the post-war estates. Whilst not forgetting ends, here we shall be concerned primarily with the beginnings. For purposes of reference and for orderliness we shall have to consider social needs under various headings. We may be able to classify institutions in this way, but the social life of a town defies analysis and will not be planned into watertight compartments; the community association alone has so many ramifications that it will tend to recur continually in our discussion.

The fact that some kind of community or social centre finds a place in most of the plans does not imply that there can be any stereotyped pattern of community development. It would be both wrong and futile to lay down any such pattern. The best that the planners can do is to create a physical framework which will be favourable to the free and spontaneous growth of the community, allowing for all its varied manifestations arising both from territorial groupings based on common residence in the locality and the drawing together of people with common interests and purposes as for instance in churches and political groups. Evidence of this concern to provide a physical basis favourable to community we have already noted in the experimental housing layouts where the conventional street is abandoned in favour of the grouping of houses round a green or play area. In the last chapter we observed the dangers of the "heartless" neighbourhood where essential buildings at the centre are too long delayed. In new housing areas community development is completely dependent on the provision of some building in which people may come together; in the last few years it has been at the mercy of every change in the capital investment programme.

A realistic view of the immediate future might suggest the wisdom of planning around the simplest forms of community equipment, for example, open space used in conjunction with the simple type of building which lends itself to erection by voluntary labour. An outstanding example of this principle at work may be seen at Hemel Hempstead where a temporary community centre, sports fields and tennis courts have been provided through the combined efforts of the Development Corporation and the L.E.A., backed up by the residents, both new and old, including some of the men who are engaged on building the new town. As the first residents came in, an old sports club was taken over and converted largely by voluntary labour. The volunteers dug drains and helped to level the field and courts. The Corporation paid for the courts and now rents them to the club. On the courts alone, £1,100 of work was done for £450. Notwithstanding a grant of £300 from

the L.E.A. the club is having a hard struggle to keep going—a stern reminder of the immense difficulties which face these new communities, even when the spirit of self-help is strong. But the value of such an enterprise cannot be judged simply in terms of money. This little club-house-cum-community centre is being used for Maternity and Child Welfare, Branch Library and Sunday School, in addition to a full programme of evening activities for both youth and adults. In striking contrast St. Paul's Cray with its 12,000 residents still awaits its temporary community centre. Mothers trek to distant welfare centres; the Sunday Schools struggle to carry on in the workmen's canteen hut. The contrast between the splendidly designed and equipped houses on this estate and the paucity of its social life and institutions was commented on by a recent visitor from Israel. She spoke of the one-roomed hovels which housed whole families in the Israeli settlements, but went on to describe the pulsing life and vitality of these communities where each new social need as it arises is met by the vigorous action of the community. Lest we should despair for these great new housing areas of our land, from which some essential virtue seems to have departed because we have created a situation so complex that people are no longer able to help themselves, we can turn to Aycliffe to restore our faith in the future. True it is only a very small beginning but one senses the essential rightness of its approach. The visitor coming in from the Great North Road sees the outbuildings of Clarence Farm which have been converted into two small shops—one of them the all-essential Post Office with its telephone kiosk outside. The cow byres have made a small but excellently equipped community centre comprising a hall with stage, committee room and kitchen. The new curate and his wife laboured with their parishioners to convert the adjoining farmhouse into the Chapel of St. Clare; the Corporation lent technical assistance to shore up the more ruinous portions. Across the yard two garages have been converted into surgery and waiting room for the first doctors in the new town. This story of improvisation seems typical of the economical pioneer spirit of Aycliffe where everything seems small and on a very human scale.

This is not the place for any detailed study of the functions and methods of community associations and centres.* But it will be convenient at this point to remind ourselves of the contribution they ought to be able to make to social development in the new towns. Some of their advantages we have already noted in earlier sections. We have seen how they provide some kind of focus for

*For this the reader is referred to *Our Neighbourhood*. A Handbook of Information for Community Centres and Associations. N.C.S.S.

neighbourhood life, bringing together individuals of all types and classes for social and recreational purposes, as well as bringing a diversity of organisations—churches, political parties, welfare societies, statutory services and other groups—together round a common table to plan for the welfare of the neighbourhood, filling gaps in community services and avoiding unnecessary overlapping. Thus, residents, voluntary bodies and statutory authorities are all associated in a common effort to create the lively, active and vigorous community life which it was hoped would become the hall-mark of the new towns. Last but not least, its task would be to manage and run the community centre which it had helped to provide and pay for. The fulfilment of this aim, together with its wider responsibilities in the neighbourhood, would provide a training ground for local democracy, for active citizenship, and, as we have seen, a vital link in the machinery of planning. Such a community centre would serve not merely as a social and recreational centre, but, by letting out accommodation, would provide a headquarters for those groups which had no premises of their own.

Offering such a unique combination of advantages, it is hardly surprising that the Development Corporations have shown the keenest interest in Community Associations, sponsoring their formations if none previously existed and fostering their growth. It was encouraging to find, as I did, such close and cordial relationships between the Corporations and Community Associations. But the value of this relationship might be endangered by its very closeness if in popular opinion they became completely identified, the Association surrendering its independence and appearing to become merely an instrument of the Corporation's policy. The risk of their being encouraged to undertake responsibilities beyond their very limited resources may well be worth taking. At Aycliffe the Association has been committed to a very heavy and continuing responsibility in connection with the first sports field which is to be laid out with football and cricket pitches, tennis courts and bowling green and a children's corner. Already the newly-formed Newton Aycliffe Football Club is playing league matches there.

The provision of community buildings in new towns raises many acute problems to which the community centre provides only some of the answers. Here are some of the factors in a highly complex situation. Although the community centre might provide headquarters for those organisations without premises of their own, the fact is that most of them wish for their own but cannot afford them. In the old towns and cities most organisations inherited, and are still using, the buildings which philanthropy and the private generosity of an earlier day had provided. In the new

towns there will be no such buildings and the day of the private benefactor appears to have gone for ever. With young families, high rents and the high cost of living, most of the residents will have a hard struggle to make ends meet. What about grants? The Corporations, faced with the necessity of making everything pay, can do little to help. With Ministry of Education and L.E.A. grants, the present tendency is to scale them down and to demand a higher proportion to be raised from local resources.

Here again the Corporations are in a position of unusual difficulty. In the first place, as the New Towns Act prevents them from selling any land, all community centre sites must be the property of the Corporations and cannot be vested in charitable or educational trusts. One possible source of help is cut off as no grants under the Physical Training and Recreation Act, 1937 can be made direct to the Corporations, although the L.E.A. may make both capital and maintenance grants to them. This method has been used at Aycliffe where the Corporation bought Clarence Farm and adapted it as a community centre with a 99 per cent grant from the L.E.A. The building, the property of the Corporation, is leased for 15 years to the Community Association. The Corporation, in its endeavour to make everything pay, is forced to charge the Community Association an economic rent which would be beyond their capacity to pay without the help of a maintenance grant made to them by the L.E.A. But many education authorities, responsible as they are for the county as a whole, and already facing enormous expenditure on new schools, may feel that it would be unfair to give priority to new town community schemes when other deserving projects have been waiting far longer.*

On some of the inter-war estates the problem was solved by the erection of cheap temporary huts. But the new towns with an eye to aesthetic values will not tolerate the corrugated iron monstrosities which disfigured so many estates. Of one thing we may be certain; it will be quite unrealistic to expect the provision of a *permanent* community centre in every main neighbourhood centre for some years to come. Various ways out of this impasse have been explored by the Corporations. Would it, for instance, be possible to build an attractive unit comprising a swimming pool linked with games area, licensed restaurant, hall and ancillary rooms, which could be used for community centre purposes whilst at the same time it would be a paying proposition? Such a unit would certainly be a great

*The Corporations may, of course, as housing authorities, make provision for buildings which are of beneficial service to their tenants, under the 1936 Housing Act, but on housing estates this has so far always been limited to small Tenants' Club Rooms or Common Rooms.

attraction and might well, in the later stages, pay for itself. But it could not be a community centre in the accepted sense, managed and run by a Community Association. Nor could the hall and rooms be separately run by such an Association, for it would need the profits of the restaurant or canteen and the rent from the more profitable lettings of the hall to support so ambitious a venture. Another proposition to overcome the inherent difficulty of finance, was to link one of the first State-run "refreshment houses" with a suite of rooms which could be let out to community organisations. This however raises difficulties over licensing, and in any case might be open to objection on grounds of social policy. Although the cases are not strictly parallel there is enough similarity to justify a reference to the fact that a number of the voluntary organisations at St. Paul's Cray, who have no alternative to using licensed premises just off the estate, are not satisfied and are desirous of finding other accommodation. Another suggestion which is being explored for solving the financial difficulties is the possibility of setting up a community fund to which industrial and commercial firms might contribute.

Other compromise solutions involve the joint use of school premises. As a temporary measure or to supplement existing accommodation this can be very helpful, but as a permanent solution it is open to many objections.* Beset by so many uncertainties, the chief of which is the fact that even the recent raising of the complete ban on community centre building will only make possible the most limited schemes, the corporations have wisely committed themselves neither to grandiose schemes nor to predetermined patterns of development. As their policies differ widely it is not possible to generalise. One of the most interesting developments is at Harlow, where the Corporation is providing as an experiment in the first housing layout, a Tenants' Common Room which can be used for children's play, meetings of all kinds, parties and social occasions and also probably for certain welfare services during the daytime. This seems an admirable start with only the incidental difficulties of designing a dual purpose building tough enough for children's play, yet attractive enough for family parties and special occasions. Problems of caretaking, cleaning and supervision will also have to be faced, but it is the hope of the Corporation that the tenants will play a responsible part in management. Assuming the success of this experiment, which will be watched with great interest, what is the next step? The Corporation is keeping an open mind but may have to decide between the claims of a

*For a further reference see later on p. 75. A more detailed consideration of this problem will be found in Chapter II of *Our Neighbourhood*. N.C.S.S.

"village hall" type of building in one of the sub-centres, or, omitting this second tier, to try to provide a real community centre in the first major neighbourhood centre serving a population of 15/20,000. If the "village hall" type only is provided, it will be necessary to look to the school hall and stage for the bigger functions. This organic growth by stages, awaiting (except in the case of the Tenants' Common Rooms which will be provided in the housing layout) the emergence of public demand, has much to commend it.

There seems no reason, however, why a group of small centres of this kind should not be constituent groups of the one Community Association serving a neighbourhood of 15/20,000. Each could have its own committee of management as a sub-committee of the Association. If in the later stages of the town's life Community Associations establish themselves in a number of neighbourhoods, what links are desirable between them? Here again it would be unwise to dogmatise. Much will depend on local conditions and the tradition which has emerged, but there seem at least three possible solutions. A formally constituted Federation of Community Associations might be formed, or it might be thought preferable to link the Associations informally through some kind of Community Council merely for mutual aid and consultation on common problems.* Or they might be associated more formally through a Council of Social Service serving the whole town. The advantage of the latter solution is that it might bring in a wider variety of voluntary social service organisations, and such bodies as the Y.M.C.A. or Chamber of Commerce which do not function at a neighbourhood level but which serve a town.

Youth Organisations

For some years there will be an undue proportion of children of school age. Later the emphasis will be on the adolescent age group. In the old towns and cities there is a serious lack of provision for "out of school" needs. But it is the bad physical environment of the city with its lack of open space and safe playing areas which aggravates the need. Although the nearness and freedom of the countryside and the carefully planned and more imaginative facilities for open air recreation may reduce the need for the type of organisation which does little more than "keep the children off the streets", it must be remembered that the new freedoms bring new temptations, and building operations provide a perennial source both of delight and danger. Children's organisations will be greatly needed because it is in them that the foundations of community can often be laid. Particularly valuable will

*An excellent example is the Wythenshawe Federal Council.

be those which teach care and respect for the countryside such as the proposed Nature Club at Harlow. Scouts and Guides also should be popular in this new town *and* country setting.

While the new towns even at their beginning should provide the right environment for the family with young children, they may seem rather dull to adolescents who have left behind the bright lights of the city, thus complicating the problems of that difficult age. This was certainly the inter-war experience at Welwyn. Now both Welwyn and Hatfield are actively encouraging youth organisations of various types. Lack of leadership, which defeated so many promising ventures on the older estates, is less likely to trouble the new towns provided they really do attract a balanced population. But there is no easy solution to the problem of premises. Youth organisations display the same desire as adult groups for premises of their own. (The Reith Committee encouraged them in this desire). But they are even less able to afford the type of building which the architects would approve. Now it seems obvious that the whole social policy of the new towns will be defeated if architectural control is to have the last word in this matter. Hemel Hempstead suggests a possible answer—the grouping of temporary buildings on unobtrusive sites perhaps screened by trees. A well-designed Scouts' hut would certainly not be out of place in one of the belts of woodland which the new towns are so carefully preserving. The special needs of the pre-Service units might be met by the provision of joint premises as at Welwyn. Churches cater for their own youth groups including some uniformed organisations, but for reasons which will be apparent when we come to consider the needs of the churches they may not be able to minister so generously as in the past to the needs of the "outsider". There will be need also for an open Youth Centre or Club. For premises, it might rely on a wing (or one of the huts) of the community centre, with some additional use of a secondary school for specialist activities particularly those of the more highly organised variety such as gym. or craft work which require the services of instructors provided by the L.E.A. A Young Farmers' Club with its headquarters in the town might help to build up that understanding and interdependence between town and country of which the new town is a symbol. Since the new towns are destined to become show places attracting visitors, including the young, from all over the world, there is strong argument for providing a Youth Hostel. Really suitable buildings are rare but an old house in the vicinity might be converted.

In conclusion it would appear that if aesthetic values and architectural control are to be reconciled with the need for temporary

premises for community work of all kinds, the most urgent requirement is for some simple form of prefabricated structure, of a kind capable of cheap production in quantities from materials not likely to become unavailable, and supplied in units which would allow for some flexibility in design and erection by volunteer groups with the minimum of skilled supervision and which, when erected, would be in simple good taste. Although difficult it should not be beyond the skill of our architects to find such a solution.

Old People's Welfare

The Willesden Survey, which provided the basic data as to the age structure of the population likely to move to the new towns, showed that at first the proportion of old people is likely to be only 3.6 per cent compared with the national figure of 13.6 per cent and even in twenty years time the proportion of old people should be only about half that for the rest of the country. But even in these favourable circumstances the need for provision is considerable as the Corporations must consider the differing needs of the three categories of old persons, the elderly who are still able-bodied, those who are infirm and need some measure of domestic care though not medical attention, and those acutely or chronically sick who are the responsibility of the Regional Hospital Board. To-day, segregation and loneliness are recognised as the greatest enemies of happiness in old age.* Housing accommodation for the first two categories should be spread out in the ordinary residential areas, avoiding the hilliest sites, and not too far from shops, post office, buses, churches, and parks or gardens. It is probable that the need for residential hostel accommodation for the infirm can be reduced by providing good ordinary housing, slightly modified for the special needs of the elderly,† with meals provided at a centre and home helps and a nursing service. Old people's clubs and friendly visits in their homes can also help to keep old people in touch with the main stream of life.

Following this line, some of the new towns are providing ordinary housing accommodation adapted in minor details for old people. Until the need arises this accommodation can be used for childless couples and single persons. At St. Paul's Cray special old

*"I hope that old people will not be asked to live in colonies of their own; after all, they do not want to look out of their windows on endless processions of funerals of their friends; they also want to look on processions of perambulators" (Mr. Aneurin Bevan, as Minister of Health, 17th October, 1945).

†For information on these modifications see *Age is Opportunity*, pp. 53-5. N.C.S.S. 1949.

people's bungalows have been built adjoining normal semi-detached and terraced dwellings. The idea that young married people might live next door to their ageing parents, thus helping to preserve the independence of the old people, the privacy of the young and the solidarity of the whole family, has been defeated by the length of the housing lists and the housing priorities as it is rare for young people and their parents to be equally and simultaneously eligible for rehousing. Moreover it must be recorded that many of the old people so far rehoused have expressed a strong desire to live away from their children. This may of course be a temporary reaction from the overcrowded conditions from which they have been rehoused.

Open Air Recreation

Lack of premises may hamper indoor recreation, but outdoor recreation is less vulnerable to fluctuations in the national economy. As the Reith Committee reminds us "green fields can forge as strong a social bond as any community centre of brick or stone". Some of the ancient country towns even smaller than the new towns have quite exceptional facilities for outdoor recreation.* The new towns, by planning from the beginning, should be able to provide for all ages and tastes facilities comparable with those which holiday towns can offer only to their visitors, so that this will, in time, come to be one of their most attractive features. Here again the emphasis at first will be on active participation rather than mere watching. The New Towns Committee recommended a minimum standard of ten acres per thousand of the population (in addition to the extensive acreage for school playing fields). But much of the total acreage may be wasted or unprofitably used if it is not subdivided so as to meet the widely differing needs of the various sections of the public. Moreover, the distribution and location of open space governs its usefulness. Despite its large total acreage pre-war Welwyn had its problems because its open spaces were not where they were most needed. An even more striking example which illustrates the difficulties of planning for outdoor recreation is seen at St. Paul's Cray. At first glance provision appears generous but when the large school playing fields are taken out, the total is only half the Reith Committee's minimum. Of the remaining 75 acres, 65 comprise rough scrub and woodland which has been left as an amenity in the centre of the estate. Consequently, although this may eventually make a fine romping ground for children and there may be woodland walks for

*See *Small Towns. Their Social and Community Problems.* N.C.S.S.

older people, the devotion of so much space to this limited purpose has meant that there is not a single football or cricket pitch, tennis court, bowling green or facility for organised games for youth, adults or for children out of school hours; perhaps even worse in these days of mounting road casualties, there are no small safe play areas for little children near to their homes. Consequently the children play in the streets. This may seem quite fantastic in post-war planning in open country, but it serves as a warning of what may happen if open space standards are whittled down by the present tendency to increase densities. The inability to provide children's play areas arises from the fact that much of the space which might have been used for the purpose has been used to produce the superb landscaping effects which characterise certain parts of this estate. The finest areas of turf on which children might be tempted to play are the wide grass verges totalling nearly seven acres on one of the main roads through the estate! Nor do the school playing fields offer a way out, for their area is less than the prescribed standard and the Education Committee cannot therefore sanction any additional use. The only solution appears to lie in a scheme for reclaiming part of the scrub and woodland but it is understood that it will be years before this can be done. By that time the bulldozers which have moved thousands of tons of earth on this hilly site will have gone; so will the enthusiasm which might have brought volunteers to support the contractor's mechanised legions. It is difficult to avoid contrasting this unhappy situation with that at Hemel Hempstead to which earlier reference was made.

We have already noted the tendency to abandon the conventional street and to group houses round green and open spaces, after the pattern pioneered by Sir Charles Reilly. Disposing houses round a purely decorative green may be less satisfactory than grouping them around some more functional unit of community life such as a tennis court, bowling green, play corner or putting green. The play corner near home would solve the problems of some mothers where gardens are either too small or too well cultivated for children's play. No elaborate apparatus is needed. Little more than a tree, a hillock, a few logs and perhaps a low wall and a sandpit are all that is required. Rough logs will become pirate ships and childish imagination will turn the low walls into houses and enchanted castles.* It must be admitted that difficulties might arise in "mixed development" areas where standards of children's

*Aycliffe has planned a number of play corners along these lines. An illustration will be found facing p. 65. Stevenage has also planned a number of attractive layouts with houses and flats around garden commons, tennis courts or allotments.

behaviour differ widely. It may be argued that the "superior" parents will be strongly averse to letting their children play with the others under such conditions. But on the whole the "superior" families are likely to have large enough gardens to play in anyway. Although swings and simple roundabouts may be popular, any form of moving equipment increases the potential dangers of unsupervised play and would probably discourage parents from allowing their youngest children from playing there alone. The provision of a sheltered seat would however encourage mothers to sit and watch their children, thus providing some degree of supervision. It will be obvious that a play area of this kind must be carefully sited to avoid annoyance to other residents.

The new towns should provide opportunities for experimenting with new and untried forms of outdoor recreation. In this brief survey they will tend to appear more prominently than the well-tried traditional favourites which will automatically find their own place. In any orderly survey, classification of recreational needs by age groups is unavoidable, but very wisely, some of the new developments cover family needs as in the new "family club" sponsored by the Welwyn Corporation where parents enjoy tennis while the children are in an adjoining play space.

As children of school age require space both for organised games and free play, the latter might be provided for in some of the woodland areas which are being preserved. Log cabins and sites for "official" camp fires would be very popular. It is probable that the London children will bring with them the idea of cycle "speedway" tracks which they may wish to make themselves. Although some authorities point out that there are far more spectators than performers, there is no doubt that this sport has given scope for a great deal of organisation by the boys themselves.

The tendency in most of the new towns is to plan the residential areas rather "tightly", the space thus saved being utilised to increase the breadth of the green wedges which separate the neighbourhoods. They are wide enough to contain schools and their playing fields as well as the additional sports fields required for youth and adult recreation. Through these green belts run the footpaths linking neighbourhoods, leading to the town centre or out to the freedom of the open countryside. These sheltered and shady paths by field, stream and woodland will be for all ages to enjoy. Little children who previously had to brave the danger of city streets may wander safely to school, mothers will push their prams and the old will saunter in the sun, so seats should not be overlooked.

Although at first there may be few old people, their needs should

not be forgotten—opportunity for a quiet game of bowls perhaps or a seat in the sun to watch others play, or maybe old men's "Cabins" in the parks where they can find the papers or a friend ready for a game of cards or dominoes.

Rivers and lakes provide wonderful opportunities for open-air sport. None of the new towns has a river of any size but several have plans for damming streams to form artificial lakes for boating, swimming or fishing.

There is no doubt that the sports with a mass spectator appeal such as professional football, speedway or greyhound racing, will be sadly missed by many of the men who move out to the new towns. Some will transfer their allegiance to the new town teams now building up, while others will form supporters' clubs, going back by coach to follow the great metropolitan clubs. Football plays an important part in building up community feeling. This is particularly true in Scotland where the Kilmarnock Social Survey tells us: "Football too has kept alive the feeling of community. The successes and failures of Kilmarnock Football Club were a source of pleasure or pain to most Kilmarnock people. When the team was playing away, it was said that the town was so deserted that at the Cross there was only to be seen a policeman and a collic."

Allotments and the clubs and societies which they sustain are likely to be popular because gardens, although available for nearly all who want them, will not be over-large, and men relieved of the time-wasting journey to work will have more leisure for cultivation. The main problem will be to find some attractive alternative to the unsightly shacks which disfigure nearly all allotments.

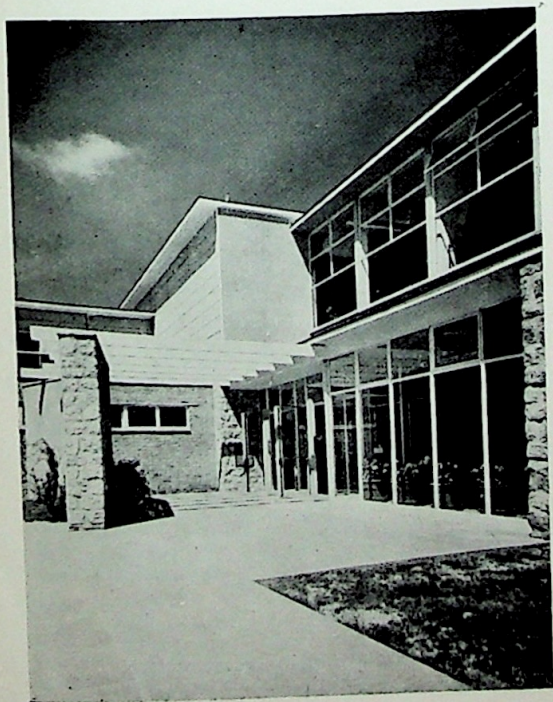
The Churches' Contribution

Despite the fact that church members are to-day so small a minority, the New Towns Committee paid high tribute to the churches' contribution as builders of community, stressing that the ideals for which they stand — duty to neighbours, concern for the "stranger in the midst" and for the welfare of the whole community, disinterested leadership, service and support for many good causes—were of supreme importance in a new community. They noted too that "common faith or opinion is a more effective basis for new associations than a common interest in hobbies or recreations". But the churches' influence goes deeper than this, leavening and penetrating society at many points, influencing standards of personal behaviour and the relationships between individuals, groups and society, inspiring and teaching the young to serve their fellows—in short, laying the very foundations



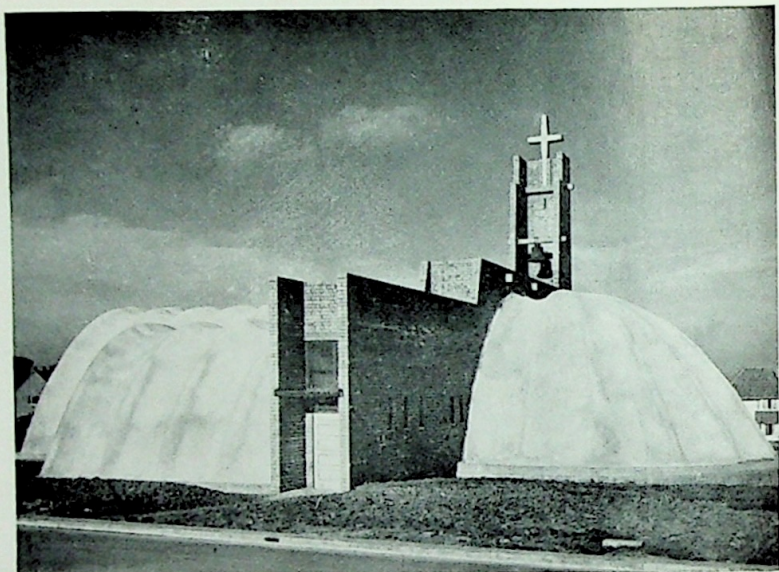
Fox Photos

Residents study plan for the new town.



At Stevenage the school programme is well ahead. Here is the Barclay Secondary Modern School.

Architectural Review



Veale & Co.

Unconventional methods, materials and design can be used effectively for temporary or semi-permanent buildings. These churches on Bristol housing estates were built for about half the usual cost.

of community without which the new towns will prove to be cities built on sand, the dreams of their planners "proud towers which shall not reach to heaven". The Report *The Churches' Part in the Provision of New Centres of Community Life** reminded us of the part which the churches formerly played, providing "the accepted common centre for most forms of communal activity and culture—artistic, intellectual, educational or recreational . . . till quite recent times . . . the greater part of the adult education of this country and the recreative life of both young and old was centred largely on church premises". It is hardly surprising therefore that the New Towns Committee should say that the churches were "of vital importance in a new town and should be enabled to play their full part. Adequate facilities must be made available for their places of worship and for the ancillary buildings their manifold activities need". Significantly they added: "The churches will, we imagine, appoint teams of men and women, clerical and lay, to come as early residents, and to grow up with the community . . . More will depend on them than on the buildings." This Report did not minimise the immense difficulties the churches would face, nor did it hesitate to impress on them the great advantages of co-operation—by sharing ancillary buildings they might have more money left for personnel and equipment.

These recommendations were made over five years ago. What are the prospects to-day that this tremendous challenge can be accepted and how far have its warnings been understood? What is happening *now* about church development? Although we are concerned with the new towns it will be relevant to observe what is happening in other new areas. The last Report of the Church Extension Committee of the Church of Scotland referred to "these new areas . . . teeming with young folk of school age and under . . . thousands of children who have never been inside a church proper, not because their parents are godless, not because of any hostility or indifference on the part of the parents, but simply because there is no church in their neighbourhood for them to go to".

Many of the difficulties are inseparable from the present shortages and controls—reports refer to the innumerable permissions required before a church can become a reality; but there is a deeper problem, more disquieting because it is fundamental. The most serious obstacle to rapid development is the problem of church division. On the surface this criticism may appear unjustified. Never have relationships between the churches been more cordial. Moreover there is the elaborate machinery of co-ordination which has been built up—the Churches' Main Committee with its local

*N.C.S.S.

Joint Planning Committees at diocesan level. But it cannot be too strongly stressed that although this is a great step forward from the days of denominational strife, it is still only a piece of administrative machinery by which sites are allocated and building licences are fairly apportioned. It would be ungenerous not to pay tribute to the spirit which informs these committees and the warm and friendly co-operation which they have evoked at these high levels of church and civil planning. But their very success conceals hidden dangers. We might easily be misled into thinking that this planning machinery was a step towards unity whereas in fact it is a rationalisation of our traditional differences and a means whereby they will be perpetuated, carrying over into the new towns a pattern of church development which, in the light of present circumstances may be wholly unrealistic.

All the new towns report the best of relations with the church planning committees and the allocation of sites goes on apace. It is encouraging to read of all the principal denominations coming together and in perfect amity sharing out the many sites in a new town. But against the churches' present shortage, not merely of money and materials, but of men and women—clergy, Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, deacons, workers and leaders in all branches of the churches' life and work—what conceivable hope is there that all these diverse causes can be established?* It is likely that gifted and devoted clergy will go to these key appointments in the new towns but it can only be at the expense of other new areas now lying beyond the influence of the church. In face of the churchless multitudes on the new housing estates, can such a diffusion of the churches' diminishing resources be justified? Let us face up squarely to some of the difficulties. Finance alone is a staggering burden, with soaring building costs which demand £15,000 for a simple "hall-church". New town congregations will be mainly young families living almost beyond their means. There are neither wealthy benefactors nor untapped resources. Nor can church development be financed by the football sweeps to which other forms of community activity are being driven. The Development Corporations cannot help except by giving generous terms for sites. Moreover the planners prefer soaring spires to grace their town centre skylines rather than the squat little church in the neighbourhood.

Of the five sites shown on the original plans for St. Paul's Cray,

*It should be understood that the position in Scotland is slightly less serious for there is less chance of overlapping as the Church of Scotland is responsible for about 80 per cent of the total church enterprise (a figure mutually agreed and confirmed by the allocation of building licences).

it is now doubtful whether more than three will be taken up; at present not even a temporary church has been erected. Experience here suggests that a combined operation might have produced a temporary building for joint use by now. But difficulties beyond the comprehension of the layman must exist, for the Aycliffe Report for 1949/50 mysteriously states: "Owing to the expense involved, the Anglican and Free Churches were unable to reach agreement on our suggestion that they should share the use of the first church to be erected". There is no doubt that it is much easier to share a temporary building than a permanent one. Lest we despair unduly, we should recall the story previously related of church initiative at Aycliffe.

There is deep concern about this problem for many churchmen realise that the new residents are less likely to be concerned about denominational "labels" than the prospect that their children will grow up beyond the wholesome influences of church and Sunday School.

So far there are few experiments in co-operation. At Hemel Hempstead the Congregationalists are using the temporary community centre for Sunday School purposes and the first Anglican Church which is to be built opposite the permanent community centre comprises a building for worship, a range of rooms for teaching and small groups, but with no Parish Hall. Since the community centre is to be adjacent it is hoped that premises will be available there for major social functions. This appears to be an experiment of considerable significance from which both church and community may learn much. It indicates a willingness on the part of the church to work in close and equal partnership with the secular body, sharing resources of money and personnel, going out in friendship to the places where people are, instead of relying solely on building up its own experiment in "total community" into which the outsider is invited.

Even such a scheme is not without its problems. It is dependent on the willing co-operation of the Community Association managing the centre, on whose committee the church, although represented, will have no controlling voice. Much will depend on the extent to which the church and its members have co-operated with other individuals and organisations in the long campaign to establish the Centre. Difficulties might arise if the total accommodation was seriously inadequate. At Aycliffe where the Church has only a tiny chapel and room of its own and the Community Centre has only a tiny hall, room and kitchen, the difficulty is already present. Although relations are excellent the Community Association could

not grant the Church the exclusive use of the centre for one night in the week because of pressure on its limited space.

The converse of this scheme, the type in which the church provides both church and community buildings, presents a different kind of dilemma. Such a scheme of community provision could not be grant-aided as a community centre unless it had a management committee representative of all interests in the neighbourhood. Here again the church which had carried the major part of the financial burden would have no controlling voice and would be very doubtful of a scheme in which it could not prevent its own premises from being used for purposes of which it could not approve. There is no solution yet to this problem of trusteeship, but a number of interesting experiments are taking place outside the new towns.

By far the most revolutionary scheme with far-reaching implications comes from a new town where a strong Council of Christian Congregations representative of almost all the denominations has been in being for ten years. It is an established town, and its churches, strong and active, were alive to the great challenge and opportunity which the proposed doubling of the town's population would bring. But they were concerned as to whether their resources were equal to such a challenge for many of them still had heavy debts, uncompleted building schemes, and soaring costs of extensions; overburdened clergy and insufficient workers were typical even of this town which had a reputation for its strong churches. With courageous realism the Council of Christian Congregations decided that in this new situation the old pattern of church development by the launching of a number of separate and struggling denominational causes while the authorities were simultaneously struggling to launch community projects, was quite unrealistic. Convinced that a point which unites all Christian people with those outside the churches who are concerned for social welfare, is the need to build up home and family life as the true basis of society, the Council of Christian Congregations suggested to the Development Corporation that their "most direct contribution to the life of the growing new town would be to offer to undertake, in the fullest consultation with the Corporation and the U.D.C., the task of education for family life in the widest possible context by the establishment of a 'family centre' in one of the new neighbourhoods". The scheme was only outlined in general terms and it was emphasised that it must be dependent upon the degree of co-operation from authorities making educational and social provision. The proposals included "an entrance of an attractive 'shop front' nature where, with the co-operation of various authorities, demon-

strations of practical homecraft might be given with talks on housing and planning, rents and rates, furnishing and child care. These would be open to all." Behind this would be the specifically Christian Centre—a family club on a family basis, with ordinary social activities, discussion and Christian teaching. The warden could put each family who so desired in direct touch with any of the clergy or ministers in the town. "Such a centre with its atmosphere of normal Christian family life would also be an appropriate centre for education for family life for young men and women and where marriage guidance where needed for older people could be arranged". The outline plan for the building suggests a Demonstration Centre, Canteen, Recreation Hall, Meeting Hall with stage and film equipment and ancillary provision for discussion, teaching, some Sunday School work, craft work and play space for small children. Only a small chapel is suggested for informal and week-day worship as Sunday worship would continue for the time being largely in the existing churches, but when necessary the hall with its platform would be available. It is emphasised that "this building is *not* on the scale of a community centre and any really large social events should take place there".

At present this hopeful and interesting scheme with its implications far beyond the new towns is held up by an administrative tangle of extreme complexity and some delicacy. The local churches, although they wish to co-operate in this way, have no executive power to do so, and are dependent for money for new work and staff on denominational funds. Moreover, site buying and planning is in the hands of the County Churches Joint Planning Committee which, although it is completely interdenominational, including Roman Catholics and Protestants, has to refer all decisions to the respective denominations for action. Unfortunately, consideration of a scheme of this nature falls outside its terms of reference for its function is strictly limited to licences, planning, and the allocation of sites. The second difficulty is that while this scheme represents *almost* all the churches there, there are abstentions, whereas the Joint Planning Committee is 100 per cent representative and must by its nature come to decisions which are in effect unanimous. It is therefore powerless to act. There seems no way to cut this "Gordian knot" unless the terms of reference of the Joint Planning Committee could be extended to cover social problems of this kind. Happily there is a precedent for this, arising, strangely enough, from the setting up of the new consultative machinery required in connection with the State management of the liquor trade in the new towns. Under the 1949 Act, the Development Corporation, before preparing for the Home Secretary's confirmation a scheme for a

Local Advisory Committee must consult with other requisite persons or bodies. Under the heading "community interests" it was agreed to invite representation from the churches and the obvious choice was the nominee of the Joint Planning Committee as the only fully representative body. This extension of the Committee's activity into the social realm might have important implications in breaking the deadlock to which we have referred.

Commercial and Provided Entertainment

The decision to adopt State management for the liquor trade in the new towns is an interesting endorsement of the original Welwyn Garden City policy. The Reith Committee, referring to the "delicate, contentious and vital issue of licensing", suggested that "the provision of food and drink should be regarded as one of the minor arts of social life", and recommended that inns and restaurants should provide both food and drink; that some in the town centre might have terraces overlooking the thronging activity of the streets; that others might have gardens or bowling greens, and some might provide music, a dance floor or indoor games. Experience at Welwyn suggests that the early provision of a really good restaurant and at least one good hotel would serve the dual function of improving the social possibilities of the town for its residents and in providing welcome and hospitality for the many visitors who will come from all over the world.

Cinemas will be greatly missed, for none of the new towns has facilities in any way comparable with those which the new residents previously enjoyed. Because of heavy costs, cinema circuits are unwilling to build even if they could get licences. To meet this problem Harlow Corporation has designed a factory shell which, as a temporary expedient, could be equipped as a cinema, reverting to industrial use later.

Cultural Provision

Whilst the New Towns Committee thought that towns of 40/60,000 when fully developed might support a theatre, concert hall and art gallery, the problem is how to meet these important cultural requirements in the long years before they become a practical possibility. If the first permanent community centre were to be built in the town centre, its hall holding 400/600 with stage and concert platform, although used mainly for amateur performances, would also make possible occasional visits from repertory companies and professional artistes.*

*A detailed consideration of this matter will be found in *Small Towns: Their Social and Community Problems*. N.C.S.S.

Welwyn, in whose development George Bernard Shaw showed so keen an interest, hopes to commemorate the great dramatist by a Memorial Theatre to be built in the delightful setting of the campus at the town centre.

While buildings constitute the main "bottleneck", the possibilities of open-air theatre are worth exploring although there are risks when no alternative covered accommodation is available in bad weather.

Although it seems unlikely that County Colleges will be built in the early years of the new towns, the demand for evening classes and other forms of further education may be considerably greater than in the large cities where the long journey from work discourages many young people from such activities.

THE WIDER PROBLEMS. CONCLUSIONS

The need for national decisions—making the London plans work—emergency policy needed for public and community buildings—effects on rural life—"no turning back".

THIS study of community development in the new towns has ranged far and wide over many fields of human activity because so many diverse factors, social, economic and political, as well as the less tangible things of the spirit, condition the growth of community, determining whether the new town will become just a tidy collection of houses or whether it will develop as a living community of people, proud of the town to which they belong, not merely for the graciousness of its setting and the dignity or humanity of its architecture, but because they are actors playing a vital part in the unfolding drama of its creation.

Inevitably this study has concerned itself very much with the problems which the new towns face. This emphasis on the difficulties is no evidence of any lack of faith in this great venture; nor is it intended in any negative spirit of criticism but rather as a realistic appraisal of the situation as it is now and is likely to be, so that the difficulties may be understood and overcome. It has been difficult to avoid comparisons which may appear invidious between London County Council satellites (in particular the one where my experience is both intense and personal because it is my home) and the new towns. But it must always be remembered that the comparison is between performance and promise, and there is obviously the danger that the promise of the new towns may not greatly exceed the performance of the housing estates. However, there is ground for real optimism in what has already been achieved in some of the new towns. To quote one instance alone, by the time that Hemel Hempstead had 250 houses occupied, its first shopping centre of 14 shops was nearly complete whilst approval had been given for a further 6 shops and a neighbourhood Post Office. Approval for a main hall for this neighbourhood is likely this year and it is expected that work will be started on the first public house. The first primary school is occupied; as already recorded, the Green Hills Club is flourishing as a community centre and the Corporation has approved the start of work on the neighbourhood recreation ground and on two football pitches and a cricket pitch.

If sheer numbers rehoused were the only criterion and if no

account were to be taken of the more fundamental difficulty of building communities, then nothing could detract from the massive achievements of the London County Council. It is not of course easy to understand why the initiative and drive which can produce nearly 4,000 houses on one estate in record time, cannot make the infinitesimally small additional effort to provide one temporary community centre whose cost is roughly equivalent to that of *one* house. This leads us straight to the first of the great issues the solution of which lies outside the control of the Development Corporations, and which can only be solved at a national level. This is the unsolved problem of how to make the plans for dispersal and decentralisation from London effective. The irony of the present situation is that the very success of the London County Council housing programme merely intensifies its difficulties; for as fast as it rehouses people, whether inside or outside the county, others come in to occupy the accommodation vacated (often attracted by the jobs available in industry which is still drifting in to occupy the premises vacated by the factories moving out to the new towns!). This absolute necessity of synchronising the dispersal of work and people can only be solved at the highest national level for as we have already seen it is the Board of Trade which determines the relocation of industry, and its policy has neither been helpful to the new towns nor conducive to the policy of dispersal.

Equally unfortunate, as we have already noted on page 51, has been the Ministry of Labour's insistence on recruitment for new town jobs through the normal machinery of the London Labour Exchanges, for this is already accentuating the very drift to London which the new towns are being built to reverse.

The second difficulty is that cuts, past, present and impending, in the civil building programme may so severely handicap all community development as to render almost meaningless the whole new towns experiment, for in a completely new town nothing can be done without some buildings, however rudimentary, in which to meet. Although the recent easing of the absolute ban on all community centre building is greatly to be welcomed, it is feared that the help may be too little and too late to avoid a disastrous hampering of community development in those towns where for instance the need for premises was urgent before any new residents began to arrive. In the present grievous national difficulties any elaborate provision would be as wrong as it would be impossible. All the emphasis must therefore be on improvisation, even if some lowering of aesthetic standards is inescapable. Better a temporary hall than an empty site as the symbol of the breakdown of community. In just the same way we should not allow the architects' and planners'

understandable passion for design and outward beauty to frustrate the need and desire to build temporary churches. Struggling for our very existence we may not be able to afford great and monumental architecture; but nor can we afford to neglect the things of the spirit. Even if no longer, as in earlier days, we know how to raise "out of the populous city, grey cliffs of lonely stone, into the midst of sailing birds and silent air", we may yet, with faith related and relevant to the common things of everyday life strive towards some new mastery of the lesser mysteries of "domestic space" in church and community architecture. The simple beauty and dignity even of horizontal space rightly used, may be inherently satisfying and provide some compensation for an age whose lesser faith cannot rise to the former splendid mastery of the perpendicular.

Another building cut which may have repercussions in the new towns affects the proposed new Health Centres. Here again it may well be that the full experiment must await less troubled times, and that all that the new towns can hope for is a limited scheme to house such essential services as maternity and child welfare and school medical services. This is what is being done at St. Paul's Cray, where the inaccessibility of these services has been serious. In this matter of health, the redeeming feature is that the new towns with their magnificent opportunities for outdoor recreation, their healthy setting and nearness to fresh food supplies and the lessening of strain as compared with the noise and bustle of city life, should make less claim on the Health Centres which are in fact centres for the treatment of disease. "Houses are more vital than hospitals. It is part of the blindness of physicians not to have succeeded in teaching this humble lesson".* It is true that the whole atmosphere and environment of the new towns should make for positive health, not merely of the individual but of the community as a whole—that is for social well-being. It is equally true that the latter may be undermined by gross failure to provide for the social needs of the community; the loneliness, boredom and frustration so characteristic of housing estates is a predisposing factor towards individual disease, just as much as it is a factor conducive to the social malaise which reflects itself in delinquency and divorce statistics. We are reminded that the two professions of medicine and town planning are "heavily concerned not only with the affairs of the living generations but also with those of the generations yet unborn. The provision of an environment can do more than determine the comfort of the lives of the existing generation; it affects also and profoundly the destiny of a nation in that it moulds the behaviour and attitudes of the

**The Healing Touch.* Harley Williams.

people. The ultimate object in planning as I see it, is to create a world into which babies are, and can be, welcomed, a world into which babies would wish to be born.”*

The last of these great issues lying outside the control of the new towns is that of rents. Except in so far as it affects social policy, it lies also outside the scope of this study. But we cannot avoid comment on the difficulty which the new towns will encounter as a result of the operation of the Rent Restrictions Act, and the fact that at a time of dangerously high living costs their rents will unavoidably be higher than the rents for comparable accommodation elsewhere.†

It is not easy at this stage to form a clear estimate of the probable effects of the new towns on their rural environs, partly because some of these effects are opposing and tend to offset or cancel each other out. Here we can only refer briefly to them. One of the great aims of the garden city movement was to restore the historic pattern of town and country which had been destroyed by the Industrial Revolution—the linking of town and country in mutual interdependence. Letchworth, as we saw, was able to claim after only twenty years that its countryside had revived immeasurably, both socially and economically. Since that day, however, the whole position of the countryside has been revolutionised and the impact of the new towns must therefore be considered not only in the light of the profound changes which are taking place to-day, but the even more profound changes which to-morrow is likely to bring. Amid many uncertainties, a few factors stand out as known or predictable. In the first place, it may reasonably be assumed that agriculture will continue to prosper, but its increasing mechanisation will result in a considerable displacement of agricultural workers. At present the combined result of full employment and the reduction in the size of rural families has *temporarily* reduced the number of workers available for seasonal employment so that farmers have become to some extent dependent on workers normally living in towns. But it is a passing phase and it is inevitable that increasing mechanisation will so reduce the number of workers both seasonally and permanently employed that before long there will be a considerable surplus of labour. Whilst some of this surplus may be drawn off to industry in the new towns much of it may be absorbed by the siting of small modern factories in the villages, their location there being made

*Prof. F. A. E. Drew, M.D., D.Sc., in an address to the Town and Country Planning Summer School, 1950.

†At Crawley, which is quite typical, the inclusive rent for a three-bedroom house of about 1,000 sq. ft. is about 6s. per week higher than that charged by the local rural district council.

possible by the increasing availability of electric power and improved transport facilities. In the light of such considerations, rural population trends are almost unpredictable. Additional complications are the opposing effects of overseas emigration of the young and their replacement by old people retiring to the country, the combined effects of which may lower the marriage rate to the point at which replacement of the population becomes problematical. Into this already confused situation another new factor is now entering. Although the rate of rehousing in rural areas is far from satisfactory, the position of those on the waiting lists is so much less hopeless than that of those on urban waiting lists that there are already signs in certain areas of a drift back to the countryside.

Against such an uncertain background of future trends and possibilities, how can we estimate the probable effects of the new towns? We may begin by assuming that they might provide a full urban life for some agricultural workers who, living in the town, could go out to work in the surrounding country. In addition they may provide social and cultural amenities of a fairly high order for the surrounding villages which could not sustain such amenities themselves. Whilst this focusing of the social life of the countryside on the new town may help to make rural life more tolerable for the younger generation, it can hardly fail to have certain adverse effects on the social life of the villages, weakening their community life and making them a prey to increasing suburbanisation until they end up as dependent adjuncts of the new town. This process is likely to be accelerated by the new pattern of secondary education based on the towns, which, although it opens new doors of opportunity for village children, tends to make the towns the true focus of their lives and makes them restless and dissatisfied with their rural environment.

Secondly, the new mobility which the petrol engine has brought to the countryman is a relative one. For the farmer with his car, life, even in a very isolated community, can be tolerable for his whole family. The farm worker who can only afford a cycle or motor-cycle is himself mobile but his wife and family are much less so. Thus the attractions of a new urban environment are likely to appeal strongly to them. We may therefore expect to see an increasing tendency for a two-way traffic to develop, with some agricultural workers living in the town and going out to the country to work, whilst the wealthy commuters come in from rural homes to work, to shop and for entertainment.

Another adverse effect on the surrounding villages is the substitution of an urban pattern of local government for the Parish Councils which are playing such an important part in reviving

democracy at local levels. This criticism might be to some extent disarmed if the Parish Councils were to be retained in an amended form in the manner suggested by the Second Annual Report of the Boundary Commission. It would certainly be ironic for the new towns to concentrate on building up their own neighbourhood life modelled in certain ways on the old pattern of the village, whilst at the same time destroying that pattern of life in the surrounding villages.

In this study our concern has been mainly with the new towns already designated, so it has not been possible to give adequate attention to the overspill problem of the vast conurbations of South Lancashire, Birmingham and Tyneside, for which plans are still awaited. The difficulties of Manchester alone seem almost to defy solution. Speaking of them, the author of the Manchester Plan* comes to certain conclusions considerably at variance with current new-towns policy, when he states:

" We have not given sufficient thought to the problems which will arise from large-scale movements of population. I am more than ever convinced that they will only be accomplished in the time available where the distance between the dispersal and the receiving areas is the minimum possible, consistent with the policy of restricting and controlling a mere overall circumferential expansion of our present development boundaries The likelihood of large-scale complementary residential and industrial development in new development areas is too fanciful for serious consideration and comprehensive over-spilling should therefore be designed so that travel to and from the old places of work may be carried on for some years at least

"The present position so far as industrial development is concerned is one of complete deadlock where the over-spilling areas have full employment. Virtually no industrial development has taken place at Wythenshawe and it would seem that none will do so except where Manchester industries desire to move, and then only when the Corporation are able to arrange that existing premises are not used for the purpose of increasing industrial employment in the city

"The difficulties of over-spilling population are enormous and where they can be simplified by the over-spilling authority being prepared, with the appropriate national assistance, to undertake the development of the reception areas, I am convinced that then

*R. Nicholas, City Surveyor to the City of Manchester, in a paper presented to the N.W. Regional Conference of the National Housing and Town Planning Council.

successful large-scale movement of the population might best be secured in an efficient and punctual manner."

It will, of course, be appreciated that the problems of new town development vary very much in different parts of the country. It seems unfortunate, therefore, that the Central Advisory Commission, as recommended by the Reith Committee, was not set up.

Although there will be many who will ask whether this is an appropriate moment to embark upon this great adventure in town building, there are, I believe, a number of powerful and compelling reasons why it would be folly to slow down the enterprise now. Firstly, so much research, planning and site preparation has been done, in addition to the actual building now in progress, that it would be absurd to throw these considerable achievements away. Secondly, the national interest will be better served by the increased productivity of industry manned by healthier and more contented workers, living in good surroundings. Thirdly, houses must be built somewhere. They may be built in the wrong places, either adding to metropolitan congestion or to suburban sprawl. In the long run it will be far cheaper to build them in the right places, that is in the new towns or in expanded small towns well beyond the cities' limits. In fact it is worth emphasising that there is no real alternative to this policy. Despite the immense efforts of the London County Council it still has a waiting list of about 200,000 families whilst the London Boroughs have a similar total. Housing sites within the central London boroughs are now practically exhausted whilst ever increasing transport costs and traffic congestion spell the end to further suburban sprawl. The London County Council out-county development is now nearing completion and the Minister has indicated that he will sanction no further development of this type. These inescapable facts call for an urgent speeding-up of both the new towns programme and the expanded towns scheme. As there is no sign yet of the latter being implemented much of the weight of London's vast housing need in the immediate future is going to fall on the new towns whose progress must therefore be accelerated if a very serious situation is to be avoided. The carrying forward of this great human enterprise, notwithstanding all its difficulties, would be an inspiration to our own people and an example to the whole world—tangible and demonstrable proof of the vision and vitality which our way of life can inspire. Finally, there is the overwhelming strategic argument. While the hearts of men remain evil and the satanic powers of the atom remain uncontrolled, the great conurbations, in which so large a proportion of our population and productive resources are piled up, remain the greatest temptation to any atomic aggressor. In these circumstances it would seem

that for once the needs of defence, instead of thwarting social progress should demand its swift and urgent acceleration. With so much in favour of the new towns we must have faith even at this dark hour, to turn our dreams into reality. Thus we may, redeeming the years that are lost, bequeath to the unborn generations a heritage of splendid cities wherein the spirit of man may find a new and nobler setting.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION GROUPS

The following brief list of questions is in no sense exhaustive but is intended merely as a suggested outline for study groups. Although definite questions have been posed, it is hoped that groups will not confine themselves too narrowly to them. Although for convenience the questions are linked with the various chapters, it must not be assumed that the answers will necessarily be found therein. Indeed the study raises many more problems than it answers. If it starts people thinking without providing too many set solutions its main purpose will have been achieved.

SECTION I

Chapter 1. Why do suburbs develop? What are their advantages and disadvantages?

How did the Industrial Revolution affect the historic pattern of town and country?

Planning took the wrong turning when the Garden Suburb triumphed over the Garden City. Do you agree?

Chapter 2. What are the outstanding lessons of Letchworth and Welwyn?

Chapter 3. Should new towns be built on relatively undeveloped sites, or as expansions of existing small towns?

SECTION II

Chapter 4. In what ways is social and community development governed by physical planning?

Does the grouping of houses round a green help to bring people together?

Can an urban community be built up on a rural or village pattern? "Mothers and children first". Is this a sound motto for the town planner?

Is there such a thing as a self-contained neighbourhood?

Shops in the neighbourhood, or better shops at the town centre. Which should come first?

What are the difficulties in building up a socially balanced town and neighbourhood? Do "umbrellas mix with cloth caps"?

How can the new residents be made to feel welcome? What are the points of friction between old and new residents and how can they be smoothed over?

"Planning for the people—by the people". To what extent is it possible and by what means?

Chapter 5. The task of the planner is to create a framework favourable to the free and spontaneous growth of the community? What is the special contribution which the community centre and community association can make to the new town? Are there any dangers of creating a stereotyped pattern of development? Many organisations want their own premises; few can afford them. How can this difficulty be overcome?

Should buildings be provided in advance of need? If so, what types? Better an unsightly temporary hut than an empty site. Do you agree?

Should the new towns concentrate on outdoor (rather than indoor) recreation where they already have great potential advantages?

Do you think that unsupervised play areas for young children are practical?

In what ways can the churches co-operate together, and with the authorities, to build up the life of the community? What are the difficulties which confront them?

The most important contribution to the social life of the new towns would be the provision of licences for restaurants, cafés, clubs, swimming pools, gardens. Do you agree?

To what extent would a well-equipped Community Centre at the Town Centre meet the need in the early years for a theatre, concert hall, art gallery?

Chapter 6. What are the main difficulties which prevent the policy of dispersal from being effective (a) in the country as a whole; (b) in the London region?

Is there a danger of dissipating limited resources over a large number of new towns thus preventing them from growing properly?

Would it be better to concentrate on *completing* a few towns as "demonstration" towns, from which valuable lessons might be learned?

"Houses are more vital than hospitals" (or Health Centres, or Community Centres). Do you agree?

What are the probable effects of the creation of large new urban centres in rural areas?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

<i>Britain's Town and Country Pattern.</i> Summary of Barlow, Scott and Uthwatt Reports. Ed. G. D. H. Cole. (Faber & Faber, 1943)	2s. 6d.
<i>Building of Satellite Towns.</i> C. B. Purdom. (Dent, 1925)	25s. od.
<i>Churches' Part in the Provision of New Centres of Community Life, The</i> (N.C.S.S., 1947)	6d.
<i>Community Associations and Local Authorities.</i> F. S. Milligan. (N.C.S.S., 1948)	1s. 6d.
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